



City of Medicine Hat Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Plan

Final: October 17, 2024

expedition
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

October 17, 2024

Paul Francis
Acting Manager Cultural Experiences and Events
City of Medicine Hat
580 First Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8E6

Dear Mr. Francis,

Please find enclosed the City of Medicine Hat Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Plan. It was a pleasure working with the Project Steering Committee to develop this important report. We look forward to hearing about your successes in implementation.

If you have any questions or require clarification on the attached report, please feel free to contact me at 780-266-7888.

Sincerely,



Justin Rousseau, Managing Director
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.



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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance to the City of Medicine Hat and their service delivery partners in making decisions that best meet community needs for arts, heritage, and entertainment. Medicine Hat has a robust and active arts, heritage, and entertainment sector that provides outstanding benefits to the community. The sector is an integral part of the community, and it plays a leading role in shaping community identity, fostering a sense of belonging, supporting the local economy, and positively contributing to resident quality of life.

Opportunity to Enhance the Sector

There is an opportunity for the sector to move forward in a more strategic and collaborative way. Doing so will enable the diversification of cultural offerings, while also better sustaining existing offerings. It will also maximize the value gained from investments of human and financial resources into the sector made by the City, community groups, and other partners.

Vision Statement

Our community will work together to sustain and grow the arts, heritage, and entertainment ecosystem that make Medicine Hat an engaging, inclusive, and attractive place to live.

Photo Credits: RJF Productions



Outcomes

Through implementation of this plan, we will:

1. Strengthen partnerships between the City and organizations/groups delivering cultural services to the community.
2. Clarify roles in order to reduce competition and amplify opportunities for complementary offerings.
3. Build the capacity of community groups, organizations, and individuals to deliver cultural offerings.
4. Increase participation in cultural offerings, particularly among underserved populations.
5. Promote the diversity of cultural offerings.
6. Preserve and celebrate our histories and heritage.
7. Enhance the quality of life in Medicine Hat by celebrating its heritage, promoting arts and entertainment, and fostering a vibrant, inclusive community that enhances quality of life for residents while attracting newcomers and visitors.

Plan of Action

The plan describes two main focus areas including Program Development and Service Delivery Enhancement. Under these focus areas there are 15 priorities and 43 supporting recommendations. Recommendations were formulated based on extensive engagement with the community, stakeholders, and City staff, research and analysis, and findings from consultant assessments. Performance measures are included as part of the plan so the City can track development of the sector. The following workflow graphic describes at a high level how the plan is anticipated to be implemented.



Top 5 Actions

The following actions have been identified as the top priorities of the plan.



1 Strike an Implementation Committee.



2 Strengthen collaboration within the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector.



3 Encourage the diversity of cultural programming, especially for youth, young adults, and Indigenous people.



4 Enhance marketing and promotions.



5 Develop an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card.

Next Steps

The Plan puts forward a strategic direction that will guide the community toward its vision for arts, heritage, and entertainment. Achieving this vision will require ongoing investment, a high degree of coordination and collaboration between partners, and strong creativity. Through implementing this plan, Medicine Hat will increase participation in arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings, build its capacity to deliver cultural offerings, and enhance overall quality of life for residents.



Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

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Project Overview



Introduction

Arts, heritage, and entertainment is an integral part of the Medicine Hat community. The sector shapes community identity, fosters a sense of belonging, supports the local economy, and positively contributes to resident quality of life. Arts, heritage, and entertainment encompass a wide range of cultural pursuits, including performing and visual arts activities, heritage activities like interpretive programs, professional entertainment shows, movie/film screenings, and all kinds of festivals, events, and celebrations.



"I think the most exciting things that happen in Medicine Hat are the outdoor music festivals, street celebrations, and sporting events where the community is encouraged to attend."

– Survey Respondent

The City of Medicine Hat is committed to continuing to deliver high-quality and impactful arts, heritage, and entertainment services. To assist with supporting this commitment the City has completed this plan to help guide the City of Medicine Hat and its service delivery partners in making decisions that best meet community needs.

Process

The City of Medicine Hat Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Plan process had five interconnected phases as described next.



Project Team

A Project Steering Committee was established to oversee the planning process and provide input at key junctures.

Project Team	
Organization	Representatives
Project Steering Committee (City of Medicine Hat)	Aaron Nelson – Acting Director Community Development Paul Francis – Acting Manager Cultural Experiences and Events Leah Prestayko – Director of Community Development Trampas Brown – Manager of Guest Experience and Operations Philip Pype – Archivist Dayna Walls – Education Coordinator Xanthe Isbister – Curator of Gallery and Collections Ashley Howes – Community Resource Worker Shawn Champagne – Planning Superintendent Safira Lachapelle – Public Participation Specialist Candace Lundrigan – Cultural Programs Coordinator Tobie Laliberté – Marketing Specialist
Consultant Team (Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.)	Justin Rousseau – Managing Director Maxwell Harrison – Senior Associate Cassandra Gilmore – Associate Breanna Hives – Graphic Designer

Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this plan. Primary research was gathered through a community survey, an in-person community tour and road show, community input workshops, steering committee workshop, staff input workshop, and interviews with City Council and stakeholders. Secondary research was conducted through reviews of local, regional, provincial, and national data sources, information requests of the City, and a review of relevant literature.

1. Surveys Administered:

- b. Community Survey (520 responses)

2. Meetings Conducted:

- a. Project Steering Committee Meetings
Dates: October 17 and November 29, 2023 and May 15, 2024
- b. Steering Committee Workshop
Date: November 7, 2023
- c. Community Road Show Input Opportunity and Facility Tour
Dates: January 29 and 30, 2024
 - Youth Pizza Party (Be YOUTh Centre)
 - Staffed Engagement Booths (Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre and Big Marble Go Centre)
 - Seniors Engagement (Veiner Centre)
- d. Community Input Workshops
Dates: February 1 and 6, 2024
- e. City Staff Input Workshop
Date: February 7, 2024

3. Stakeholders Engaged (through workshops, interviews, and survey):

Invites to participate in the engagement process were sent out to stakeholder groups. 23 groups chose to participate in the engagement process, including representatives of the following organizations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Community Vibrancy Advisory Board | 13. Medicine Hat Folk Club |
| 2. Fire Keepers Society | 14. Medicine Hat Local Immigration Partnership |
| 3. Grassroots Studio | 15. Medicine Hat Public Library |
| 4. Hari Singh Photography | 16. Medicine Hat Rotary Club |
| 5. Hat Art Club | 17. Miywasin Friendship Centre |
| 6. Heartsong Studio | 18. Pop Up Parks |
| 7. Heritage Resource Working Group | 19. Potters Club |
| 8. Jazz Festival Society | 20. Strathcona Arts Group |
| 9. Local Artists (x2) | 21. Tourism Medicine Hat |
| 10. Medalta Historic Clay District | 22. Visual Arts Student Society |
| 11. Medicine Hat College | 23. YXH Events and O/A Black Light DJ Service |
| 12. Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede | |

4. Documents Reviewed:

- a. Strategies, plans, and other documents from the City of Medicine Hat.
- b. Reports, statistics, surveys, and planning documents from stakeholders.
- c. Frameworks and policies from provincial and national sources.

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Community Analysis



The City of Medicine Hat

The City of Medicine Hat is located in southeastern Alberta, 290 km from Calgary, 160 km from Lethbridge and 50 km west of the Saskatchewan border. It is situated on Treaty 7 territory and neighbours Treaty 4, on the traditional lands of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina as well as the Cree, Sioux, and the Saulteaux bands of the Ojibwa peoples. It is also on the homelands of the Métis Nation within Region 3.

The city straddles the South Saskatchewan river, which is characterized by carved coulees and provides a unique backdrop for the community. Topographically and ecologically, the area includes flat and rolling prairie. It sits within the dry mixed grass ecoregion, which provides habitat to plant and animal species not found elsewhere in the province. In addition to having a unique natural heritage, the city also has a unique economic history that includes thousands of years of First Nations activities, followed by agriculture, oil and gas extraction, and the clay products industry beginning in the late 1800s.

“

“One of my favourite concerts ever seeing was Arlo Guthrie live in concert at the Esplanade. Having been a fan for years, seeing this very cool, offbeat, and remarkable performer live was an experience of a lifetime.”

– Survey Respondent

Medicine Hat was incorporated as a town in 1906.¹ Today the city is home to numerous historic areas and resources, such as Downtown, the Hill neighbourhood, the Historic Clay District, and the Saamis archaeological site. Its core contemporary economic sectors include aerospace and defence, agriculture and food, film, oil and gas, and professional services.² Compared to the rest of the province, Medicine Hat has a relatively mild climate. With 330 days of sunshine each year it is Canada's sunniest city.



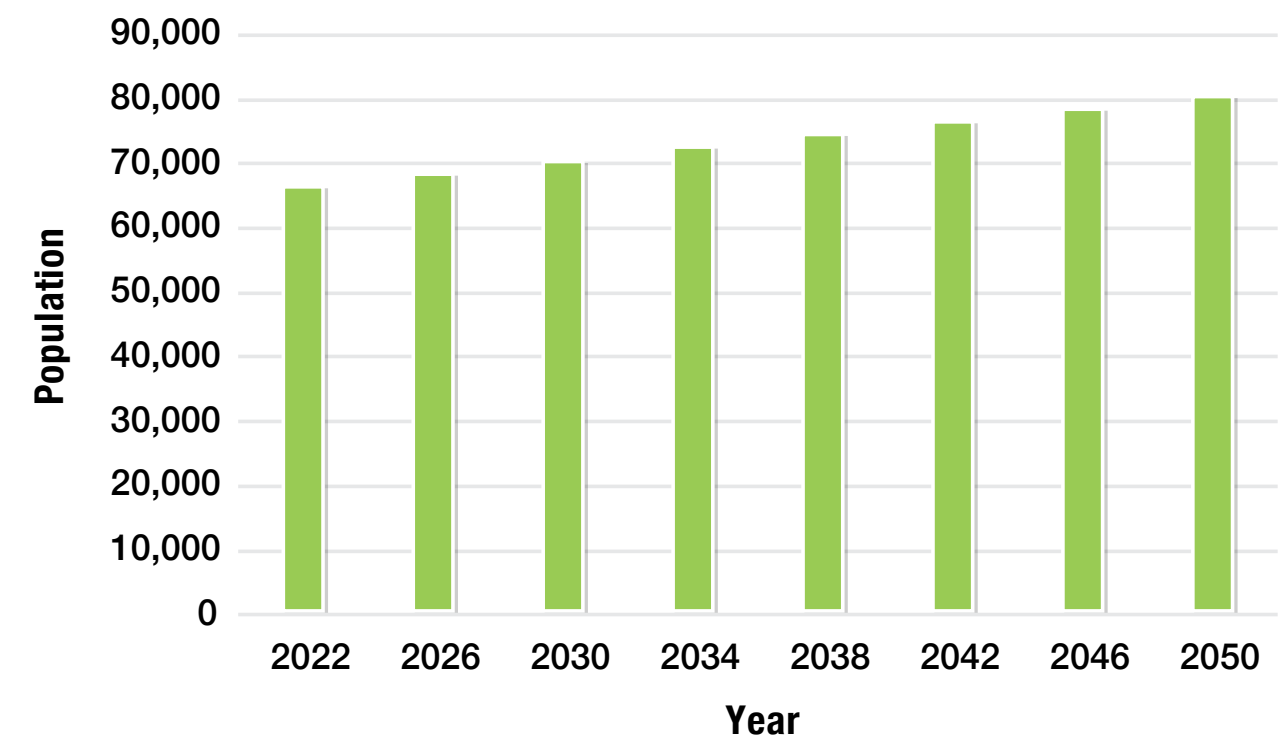
Community Demographics

Medicine Hat is the sixth largest city in Alberta. In 2022, the population was 65,949 people.³ Growth is expected over the coming decades with the population projected to be up to 80,000 people by 2050.⁴ The median age in the community is 42.7, which is higher than the provincial average of 38.4.⁵ 16.8% of the population is between the ages of 0 and 14, 62.2% are between 15 and 64, and 21% are over 65. Shifting demographics towards an older population predicts that by 2050 33% of residents will be over 65 years old.⁶

The municipality is also becoming more culturally diverse. The percentage of the population identifying as a visible minority increased by 28% between 2016 and 2021 to 8.5%.⁷ 5.2% of the population identify as Indigenous.⁸ While the majority of people identify their mother tongue as English (89.6%), 7.9% identify their mother tongue as a non-official language.⁹

The median household income for Medicine Hat was \$78,000 in 2021, which is lower than the average in Alberta (\$96,000).^{10,11} Medicine Hat also has lower housing prices, with an average home price of \$312,865 in 2022 compared to \$376,600 Alberta-wide.^{12,13}

Figure 1. Projected Population Growth in Medicine Hat



Overview of Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment in Medicine Hat

People involved in arts, culture, and entertainment in Medicine Hat have described the sector as *'vibrant, active, alive and teeming with potential'*. The sector reflects and embraces the city's heritage and unique cultural attributes.¹⁴ The community is recognized as having exceptional arts, heritage, and entertainment infrastructure.¹⁵ The cultural* sector is supported by a variety of groups and organizations such as the Medicine Hat Potters Association, Fibre Arts Society, Medicine Hat Musical Playhouse, Firehall Theatre Society, Medicine Hat Folk Club, Fire Keepers Society, Hat Art Club, and the Friends of Medalta Society. Medicine Hat College is also a key part of the local community culture with its Art and Design program, and facilities such as the Eresman Theatre and Medicine Hat Cultural Centre. Together these venues and organizations host programming, activities, plays, concerts, comedy shows, festivals, and other events and exhibits that feature a broad range of local and international talent. 755 people are said to have been employed in the arts and entertainment industry in 2021.¹⁶

*For the purposes of this report, "culture" is used synonymously with "arts, heritage, and entertainment".

In 2020, the City commissioned a report to gain insight into the current state of arts, culture and heritage in Medicine Hat. The process included engagement with 59 stakeholders. The following main challenges were identified for the sector.¹⁷

- Culture being uncelebrated and underdeveloped.
- Lack of overall cohesion despite the arts, culture, and heritage scene being very active.
- The arts community does not fully reflect Medicine Hat's diversity, particularly in relation to newcomers, youth and younger adults, First Nations, or economically vulnerable people.

“

"My favourite memory is going to a show at Medicine Hat Musical Theatre and being moved to tears and laughter all in one evening! It brought the community together."

– Survey Respondent

Photo Credits (L-R): RJF Productions, Tourism Medicine Hat, Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.



SWOT Analysis

A high-level analysis of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) as they relate to arts, heritage, and entertainment was completed to support the plan. The key findings from this analysis are provided next.

Strengths

- Strong diversity of facilities that support cultural activities.
- Active community groups offering cultural activities and strong programming provided by the City.
- The community has a rich history and unique heritage aspects (e.g. clay industry, Indigenous cultures).
- Unique artist residency programs offered.
- Medicine Hat is a safe, clean, and desirable community.

Weaknesses

- Lack of role clarity among cultural service providers in the community.
- Lack of strategic direction, goals, and performance measures to evaluate success.
- Lack of cultural programs and events for young adults, teenagers, and diverse populations.
- There may be an oversupply of some cultural facility types.
- Competition among facility operators for rental revenue.
- Lack of meeting spaces free from financial barriers.

Opportunities

- Increasing utilization of existing facilities.
- Strengthening collaborative partnerships between the City and cultural groups.
- Supporting the revitalization of Downtown through cultural programs and activities.
- Encouraging Indigenous offerings.
- Engaging volunteers and supporting them to a greater extent.
- Leveraging culture to attract more visitors and grow the local visitor economy.

Threats

- Rising inflation and costs of living could negatively impact participation in cultural offerings and financial sustainability.
- Aging volunteer base and potential for volunteer burnout.
- Decline or loss of heritage and cultural assets if they are not supported.
- Costs of maintaining a large inventory of City-owned and partner-owned infrastructure.

Service Delivery Analysis

At the present time, the City of Medicine Hat's service delivery approach is best described as Partner. The City operates facilities, provides direct programming, and supports the efforts of community groups to deliver programming. There are also several other organizations in the community that operate facilities and provide programming. Figure 2 describes the current role of the City along a continuum of municipal service delivery.

Figure 2. Service Delivery Spectrum



City-led Service Delivery

The City operates several important facilities that support arts, heritage, and entertainment in Medicine Hat. These include the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Co-op Place, Big Marble Go Centre, Saamis Teepe, Towne Square, and the Heritage Pavilion. The City strategically manages the Esplanade and Co-op Place by coordinating event schedules to complement each other and maximize community reach. Since taking over operations of Co-op Place, the City has aligned its approach with the Esplanade through targeted promotions, loyalty programs, and marketing.

Community-led Service Delivery

Community organizations and institutional partners operate other important arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities in Medicine Hat. These include the Medalta Historic Clay District, Medicine Hat Cultural Centre, Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede, Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat Public Library, Southern Alberta Light Horse Regiment Museum, theatre companies, and other businesses. These service providers offer a range of programs, events, and facility rentals. By offering these diverse options, these stakeholders strongly contribute to the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector of the community.

There are a relatively large number of organizations that deliver programs, run events, and operate facilities related to arts, heritage, and entertainment in Medicine Hat. In some instances, these offerings are complementary and serve to enhance or expand cultural offerings in the community. In other situations, the offerings compete with one another in ways that can impact the sustainability of service delivery. Areas of occasional competition include theatre rentals and programming, community events, and multipurpose room rentals.



Midnight Madness
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

Community Development Department Overview

The City of Medicine Hat's Community Development Department delivers arts, heritage, and entertainment services to the community. There are two main business units within the Department. These business units include Guest Experience and Operations and Cultural Experiences and Events. The Guest Experience and Operations unit manages guest services, box office operations, food and beverage services, event operations, and technology. The Cultural Experiences and Events unit oversees cultural programming, events, galleries and collections, TREX program, education, and archives.

Program Analysis

The City of Medicine Hat offers many arts, heritage, and entertainment programs and events for the community. These programs cater to a large range of skill levels and audiences. The main streams for the arts sector include visual art programs, music classes, and craft classes. Heritage highlights include the Medicine Hat interpretative program, Saamis Tepee Indigenous inspired programs, and residencies in historic sites like the Medalta. Notable entertainment includes culture and sport events such as the Medicine Hat JazzFest and western Canada's largest amateur skateboarding competition Beat the Heat.

“

“The Great Pumpkin Smash event at the Espalade this year was so well organized, appropriately staffed, inclusive, and fun. All the adults and kids in our group had an absolute blast doing all the activities. We are so fortunate to live in a community that puts things like this on for us.”

– Survey Respondent

“

“I went to the Spectrum Festival the very first weekend after moving to Medicine Hat. There was a lot to see and do. I thought wow, what a fun and welcoming community!”

– Survey Respondent

Partner organizations also offer cultural programming and events in Medicine Hat. The Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede hosts several events including the Stampede, Farmers' Markets, Canada Day Celebration, Beef Pen Show, Broncs & Honky Tonks Rodeo, and Christmas markets.¹⁸ Medicine Hat College features the Cultural Centre and Eresman Theatre. The Cultural Centre provides a unique venue for various cultural activities in Southern Alberta and offers studio space to organizations such as the Hat Art Club, Medicine Hat Potters Association, and the Fibre Arts Society.¹⁹ Additionally, organizations like Medalta and Miywasin provide various cultural programs. For an expanded inventory of Medicine Hat's programs, please see Appendix A.



Art in Motion
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

Facility Inventory

Medicine Hat has a large inventory of facilities that support arts, heritage, and entertainment activities. These places serve as hubs of creativity, learning, and community engagement. Notable facilities that are operated by the City include the Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Co-op Place and Big Marble Go Centre. There are also facilities run by other organizations in the community, including the Medalta Historic Clay District, Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede, and the Eresman Theatre. The City of Medicine Hat owns the Medalta site, while the Hycroft and MH Brick & Tile sites are owned by the Friends of Medalta Society. Together these facilities provide the community with spaces to connect through arts, heritage, and entertainment activities and events. For a complete inventory of the community's arts, heritage, and entertainment infrastructure, please see Appendix A.

“

My wife and I came to Medicine Hat on a business trip and toured Medalta. We were so impressed with the potential that we spent our whole ride home talking about the possibility of moving to Medicine Hat. We eventually did that and are raising our children here now.

– Survey Respondent

Spotlight on Medalta Historic Clay District

The Medalta Historic Clay District is a unique community asset. The District is run by the Friends of Medalta Society. This non-profit organization has a focus on restoring and developing the Medalta Potteries National Historic Site and the 150-acre Historic Clay District. They provide a range of adult programs, including pottery classes and creative workshops, as well as children's programs. Their education programs cater to all ages, offering activities such as field trips, day trips, special art programs, and extended community classrooms. The distinctive Medalta International Artists in Residence Program allows artists to utilize semi-private studios within the facility. Additionally, Medalta features a museum with both self-guided and guided tours. Throughout the year, Medalta hosts various events such as Artist in Residence Solo Art Exhibitions and the Motor Market and offers rental space for different occasions such as weddings and corporate events.²⁰



Photo Credits (L-R): Travel Alberta, Viator

Spotlight on Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede

The Medicine Hat Exhibition & Stampede is a volunteer community service organization dedicated to serving Medicine Hat and District with programs, events, and facilities. The grounds feature multiple facilities including an outdoor arena with a 4,000-person capacity, a 14,000 square foot auditorium, a cactus room, carriage house, fieldhouse, fireside room, grandstand banquet room, pavilion, Sierra Room, and Wild Room.²¹ The organization has expressed desire to develop a large conference facility in the future.



Spotlight on Medicine Hat College Cultural Centre and Eresman Theatre

Medicine Hat College is home to the Cultural Centre and Eresman Theatre. Both facilities play an important role as cultural hubs in the community. The Eresman Theatre is a premier venue for the performing arts with 510 fixed seats. The venue has hosted performers from all over the world as part of the Medicine Hat JazzFest and features productions from the College's Conservatory of Music and Dance.²² The Cultural Centre is a modern and versatile space that caters to a variety of cultural activities. It includes a multipurpose studio room and a visual arts gallery.²³ Several local art and culture groups regularly use the Cultural Centre, making it an important part of the community's cultural landscape.



Photo Credits (top-bottom): Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede, SeeVirtual Marketing & Photography

Figure 5. Existing Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Facilities



Utilization and Capacity Analysis of City-owned Assets

It is important to consider the utilization of arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities when determining current and future needs. Facility utilization data was sourced from the City of Medicine Hat (where available). The following provides a summary of key findings from the analysis. Please see Appendix B for an expanded utilization and capacity analysis.

Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre

- The Esplanade opened its doors to the public in 2005 and over the first ten years of operation they had 200,000 people visit their art galleries.²⁴
- Between 2016 and 2023, annual attendance for the Esplanade was highest in 2017 with a total of 99,557 attendees.
- Attendance for the Esplanade was lowest in 2021 with a total of 14,066 attendees. The low attendance was likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“

"I am glad we have a facility as beautiful as the Esplanade. It adds so much to our community."

– Survey Respondent



Co-op Place

- In 2023, Co-op Place hosted conventions (8 days), graduations (5 days), professional shows (13 days), events (6 days), and 35 junior hockey games. The City's Parks and Recreation department also booked the facility to run recreation programming for the community. A Driver Training program was run in the parking lot (23 days).
- So far in 2024, Co-op Place has hosted conventions (4 days), graduations (4 days), professional shows (5 days), events (5 days), and a Driver Training program (24 days).
- There is an opportunity to increase utilization of Co-op Place, particularly during the day and evenings when there are no hockey games.
- Between 2016 and 2023, annual attendance for Co-op Place was highest in 2016 with a total of 164,566 attendees.
- Excluding 2021, which had no attendance due to Covid-19, the lowest attendance was in 2020, with 47,996.



Photo Credits (top-bottom): Crossey Engineering, City of Medicine Hat

Attendance at the Esplanade and Co-op Place has trended slightly downward between 2016 and 2023, even in consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Theatres

There is an opportunity to increase utilization of Medicine Hat's many theatres. There are two City-owned theatres and six non-City-owned theatres. These include two theatres at the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Eresman Theatre, Monarch Theatre, Medicine Hat Musical Theatre Playhouse, Crescent Heights High School Theatre, Medicine Hat High School Performing Arts Centre, and the theatre at the Public Library.

TREX Space

This public art gallery hosted 16 exhibitions featuring 117 artists during the 2023-2024 season. It also hosts the visiting artist program which allows for an educational and immersive gallery experience.²⁵

Towne Square/Downtown Venue

This covered outdoor space is provided by the City of Medicine Hat for outdoor gatherings and events. The main utilization of this space is for events, market pods, and spontaneous use. It was noted that there were fewer events hosted in Towne Square in 2023. Inactivity of market pods is a concern to note along with usage related to loitering and rough sleeping in this space. To help increase utilization of the market pods, the City reduced rental fees from \$70 per day to \$50 per week.^{26,27}

City Managed Parks and the Riverside Veteran's Memorial Park Bandshell

City park spaces may be booked in advance and are typically used for wedding ceremonies, birthdays, family reunions, picnic gatherings, and other small scale events. There are outdoor shelters available to rent during the summer months. The Riverside Veteran's Memorial Park Bandshell is used for entertainment (e.g. busking) and community events (e.g. Remembrance Day).²⁸

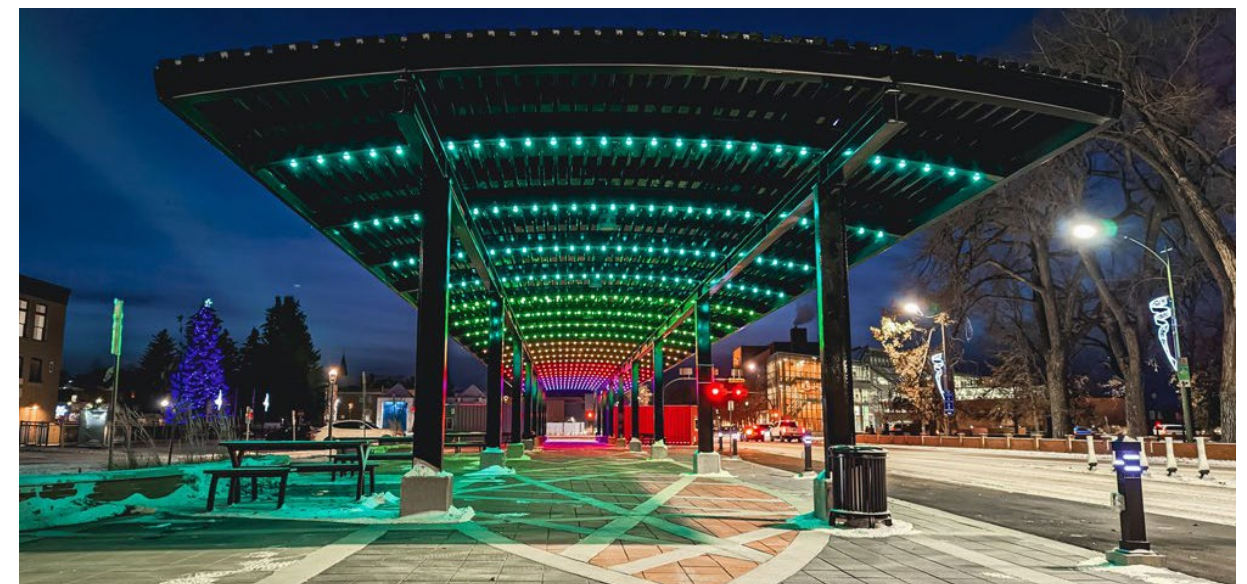


Photo Credits (top-bottom): Tourism Medicine Hat, City of Medicine Hat, Trip Advisor

Strategic Alignment Analysis

The concepts identified in this document are aligned with the strategic elements used to plan other aspects of services and infrastructure within the City of Medicine Hat. Strategic alignment was utilized as one indicator to justify future initiatives. For an expanded discussion on these strategies, see Appendix C.

- Medicine Hat City Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026
- myMH Master Plan (Medicine Hat Municipal Development Plan)
- parks+recMH (Medicine Hat Parks and Recreation Master Plan)

Policy Analysis

Existing City Policies related to arts, heritage, and entertainment were reviewed as input toward the plan. These policies included the following. For an expanded discussion, please see Appendix D.

- Heritage Resources Policy
- Public Art Policy
- Public Art Acquisition, Selection Criteria and Gift Policy
- Cultural Policy
- Archives, Art Gallery and Museum Mandate Policy

Tourism Linkages

Visitors travel to Medicine Hat to partake in its arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings. The draw is strong enough that culture and creativity are identified as one of the core brand pillars of Tourism Medicine Hat's visitor marketing. The Historic Clay District, historic downtown, Echo Dale Regional Park, and Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park are four key tourism nodes identified by Tourism Medicine Hat, and they each have linkages to arts, heritage, and entertainment.²⁹



Spring Art Classes
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

3

External Analysis





Rise Up Festival
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of three communities was conducted to provide a reference point for the City of Medicine Hat's arts, heritage, and entertainment service provision. The analysis included service delivery models for key facilities, program offerings, and performance evaluation tactics.

Communities were chosen as comparators if they satisfied the following requirements:



The municipality is located in Alberta.



The municipality is primarily an urban community.



The municipality has a similar population to Medicine Hat, with populations above 50,000 and below 125,000 in 2022/2023.

Comparator cities include Grande Prairie, St. Albert, and Lethbridge. For an expanded comparative analysis please see Appendix E.

Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Facilities and Program Offerings

The analysis found that from a facilities perspective the City of Medicine Hat and their local non-profit and institutional partners:

- Offer comparative service levels for archives, heritage interpretive facilities, purpose built performance arts spaces (e.g. theatres), and cultural/multicultural centres.
- Exceed comparative service levels for local history museums, art galleries, concert and exposition venues, major recreation centres, and arts and culture hubs (e.g. multipurpose facilities devoted to the arts).
- Is below comparative service levels for visual art studios and public library branches.
- Are not missing any category of arts, heritage, and entertainment facility provided by comparator communities.

Programming in comparator communities includes art gallery and museum tours, performing arts classes and events, concerts, seasonal heritage interpretive activities, book clubs, film screenings, comedy shows, visual arts classes, Indigenous awareness and cultural classes, and land based learning opportunities. Programs are available and specifically designed for youth, teens, and adults. Supports for inclusion are largely focused on financial accessibility, with free and subsidized activities available to some extent for qualifying individuals in each community. There are some non-profit organizations offering programming specifically for seniors and people with developmental disabilities. Overall, similar programming is offered in Medicine Hat in comparison to comparator communities. However, there are fewer programs and opportunities related to First Nation and Metis culture and heritage, performing arts instruction, and direct support for artists including professional development opportunities and available visual artist studio space.



Weaving Class
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

Arts, Heritage and Entertainment Service Delivery Models

The analysis found that there are a variety of delivery models being used in comparator communities. Overall, municipal ownership is most common among public libraries, local history museums, heritage interpretive facilities, art galleries, archives, visual artist studios, concert and exposition centres, major recreation centres, and arts and culture hubs. Non-profit operation is common among public libraries, archives, art galleries, and visual artist studios. Ownership and operation of cultural/multicultural centres is mixed, meaning that in some communities they are owned and operated by non-profits and in others they are owned by the municipality and operated by a non-profit. Institutions including local schools, school boards, and colleges play a significant role in owning and operating arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities in the comparator communities, particularly for purpose built theatres and art galleries. Theatres have the greatest diversity of owner-operator models, including municipal, institutional, non-profit, and private entities. With reference to the latter, only one facility (a performance space) among those inventoried in comparator communities is owned by the private sector. It is operated by a municipality. No instances of significant private sector service delivery was identified in relation to facilities among comparator communities.



Snapshot Comparison of Major Entertainment Venues

Like Medicine Hat, two of the comparator communities are home to at least one major entertainment venue (i.e. arenas with a capacity of approximately 7,000). Each facility is owned by their respective municipality, with both Co-op Place (Medicine Hat) and ENMAX Centre (Lethbridge) also being operated municipally. Peavey Mart Centrium (Red Deer) is operated by a non-profit agricultural society that is also responsible for the operation of the larger facility that it is part of Westerner Park. All the arenas are used outside of WHL hockey games for concerts and other live events. Among them, the Peavey Mart Centrium has the highest utilization and most diverse programming, with up to 87 program days annually. It should be recognized that in terms of trading area populations, both Lethbridge (200K) and Red Deer (250K) have ready access to more than Medicine Hat (85K).

Figure 6. Summary of Major Entertainment Venues Comparison

	Co-op Place, Medicine Hat	ENMAX Centre, Lethbridge	Peavey Mart Centrium, Red Deer
Ownership	Municipal	Municipal	Municipal
Operation	Municipal	Municipal	Non-profit
Seating Capacity	7,000	6,900	7,800
Typical Number of Annual Program Days*	Up to 67	Up to 71	Up to 87
Breakdown of Program Days	35 regular season WHL hockey games, 32 days for other large events	34 regular season WHL games, 24 to 37 days for other large events	34 regular season WHL games, 10 to 13 days for other large events, 40 of community rentals
Program/Event Types	WHL hockey games, professional shows, events, conventions, graduations	WHL hockey games, concerts and live events, major sports events, international powwow, Professional Bull Riders (PBR), trade shows, community rentals	WHL hockey games, concerts and live events, major sports events, Westerner Days, Professional Bull Riders (PBR), Canadian Finals Rodeo (until 2024), trade shows, community rentals

*Includes WHL hockey games, large events such as concerts, PBR events, and trade shows hosted in the main arena space, and community rentals. Typical numbers are based on annual ranges provided by ENMAX Centre and Peavey Mart Centrium representatives.

Snapshot Comparison of Theatres

A comparison was conducted between Medicine Hat and comparative communities to assess the number of theatres, theatre seats, and seats per capita in each location. Medicine Hat has the most number of theatres (8), the highest number of theatre seats (2,566), and the most seats per capita (1:26).

Figure 7. Comparison of Theatres and Theatre Seats

	Medicine Hat	Comparator Average	Grande Prairie	St. Albert	Lethbridge	Red Deer
Population	65,949	86,371	67,669	70,422	106,550	100,844
Theatres	8	5	7	3	6	4
Theatre Seats	2,566	1,424	1,478	862	1,637	1,720
Seats per Capita	1:26	1:63	1:46	1:82	1:65	1:59

Performance and Impact in Comparator Communities

There is no universally accepted framework for measuring the performance and reach of arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities and programming in communities. There are instead multiple potential ways to better understand their influence, including citizen participation, presence, impacts, and systems of support.³⁰ Each of these is reflected to some extent in the processes and metrics employed by the municipalities in the comparative analysis.

Among them, the City of St. Albert has the most formalized evaluation process. It includes the development of an annual Cultural Services Report Card which highlights service delivery accomplishments and provides metrics such as attendance, participant feedback, cost recovery at municipal facilities, major funding sources for municipal facilities, and volunteer numbers. The Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert, which operates the museum and art gallery under a partnership agreement with the City, also produces an annual report that includes similar metrics, along with others such as the contribution of fine arts sales to local artists, the number of artifacts accessioned, social media followers and website visits.³¹

The City of Grande Prairie reports bi-annually on high level citizen satisfaction with 'arts, cultural facilities and programs', among other municipal services. Its newly adopted (January 2024) Recreation and Culture Strategy provides the basis for more detailed future evaluation through the inclusion of potential metrics related to the strategy's goals, along with a commitment for them to be refined and operationalized as part of plan implementation. Organizations that lease the City's arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities report annually to Grande Prairie City Council on their operations using their own processes and metrics.

The City of Lethbridge also reports bi-annually on citizen satisfaction. Their survey includes high level questions about the delivery, importance and usage of various municipal services and programs such as arts and culture facilities.³² The City's Civic Culture Plan includes a monitoring and evaluation framework that will help to provide a basis for more comprehensive performance measurement. Partner organizations (i.e. those who are under agreements to provide cultural services and programs) report annually to City Council on finances and high level alignment with Lethbridge's 2021 Recreation and Culture Master Plan. The City itself produces an annual financial report, which includes reporting on event revenues from ENMAX Centre.³³

Medicine Hat has begun to survey citizens bi-annually on community sentiment related to a variety of topics. The first such survey was in 2022 and is intended to serve as a baseline for future years.³⁴ The inaugural survey asked about satisfaction with and the importance of 'cultural and entertainment facilities and programs', as well as preferred methods of communication and value of services (as a whole) for tax dollars. The City also compiles attendance stats for its facilities, including attendance, theatre tickets, number of performers, number of volunteers, number of non-ticketed events, number of art classes, number of facility bookings, and number of school tours. There is an opportunity to further enhance the annual measurement and reporting of performance in relation to arts, heritage, and entertainment.

Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Trends

Trends from the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector were identified and used to inform the plan. Effort was made to ensure the identified trends are relevant to the City of Medicine Hat. Please see Appendix F for an expanded description of the trends outlined.



ECONOMIC TRENDS

- Rising costs and inflation are key challenges for the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector. Participants are seeking more affordable events and providers identify inflation as a top obstacle to their operations.
- Participation and employment numbers in the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector have rebounded post-COVID. Additional efforts will be required to grow participation beyond this 'new normal'.
- Culture is increasingly recognized as a key element of placemaking, community building, and economic vitality. Despite affordability challenges, Albertans are still spending on culture.
- The large-scale entertainment sector is shifting to larger concerts offered by large promoters. People are travelling outside their communities to attend these experiential events.
- Consumer expectations are high, and audiences have indicated their threshold for lower quality experiences is quite low. Albertans are being more selective with their time and money.³⁵



SOCIAL TRENDS

- There is a growing understanding of the potential for the arts to boost social connectedness and combat loneliness. Arts activities can provide social opportunities, shared experiences, feelings of belonging and opportunities to learn from and about other people.
- People are looking for experiences, not just events. Experiences go beyond the core offerings of an event, and include communications, sales processes, service elements, and activities such as dining and transportation before and after.
- Participation in and support for arts and culture remains generally strong in Alberta. In 2022-2023, 70.3% of Albertans attended an arts and culture activity.



FACILITY AND PROGRAM TRENDS

- Creative hubs and multi-tenant facilities are emerging as important cultural amenities across Canada. They serve as focal points, uniting professionals from diverse arts and heritage pursuits, along with various creative disciplines, while offering accessible space and programming to the public.
- Multipurpose venues and facilities are becoming more prevalent in the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector. They allow for economies of scale and support the development of entertainment hubs that can help to anchor and sustain surrounding retail, hotel, and office spaces.
- There is a need for more inclusion in arts planning, programming, and facilities. Municipalities and organizations are being called on to increase access to culture and ensure that it reflects and welcomes the diversity of their community.

4

Community Engagement Results



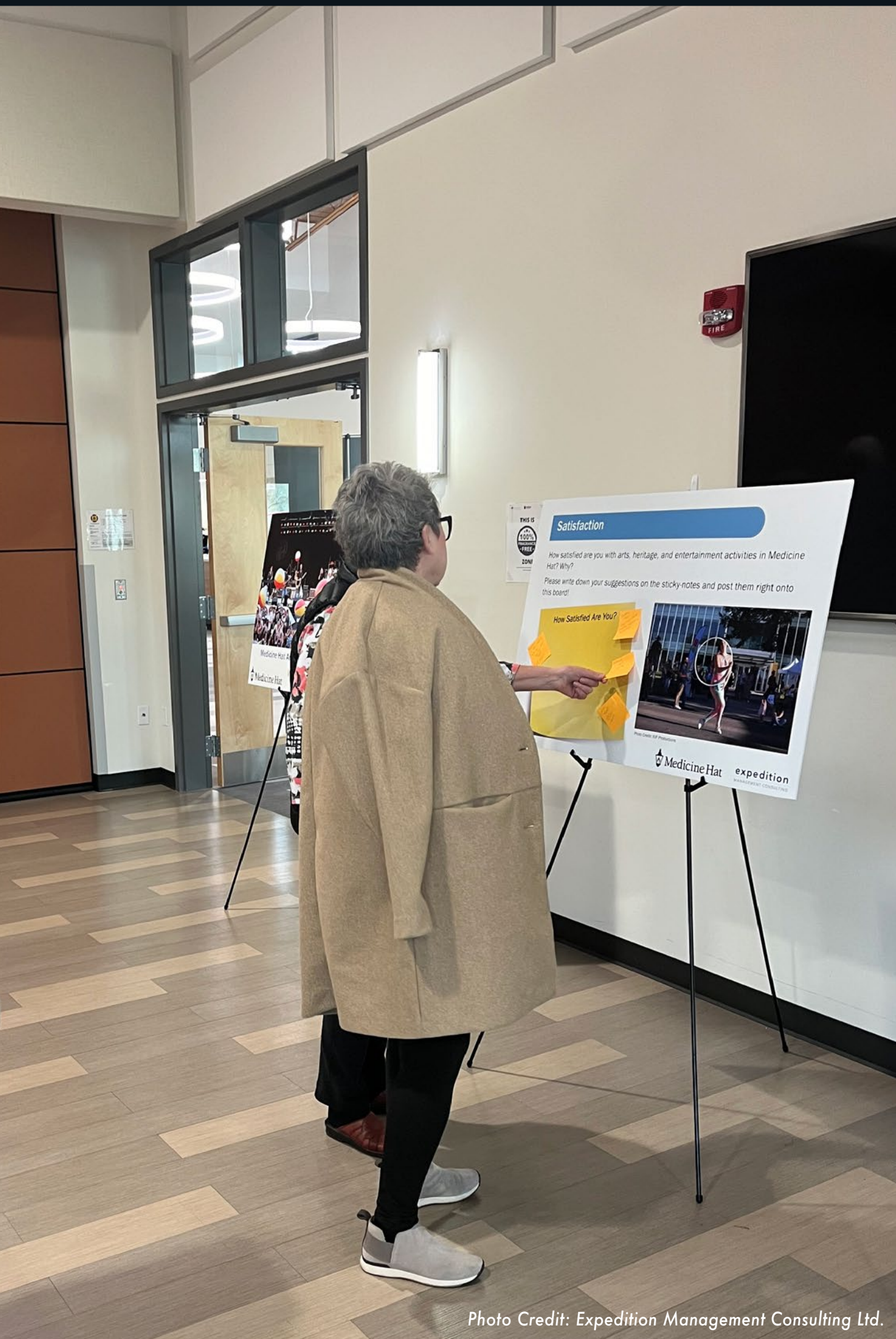


Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

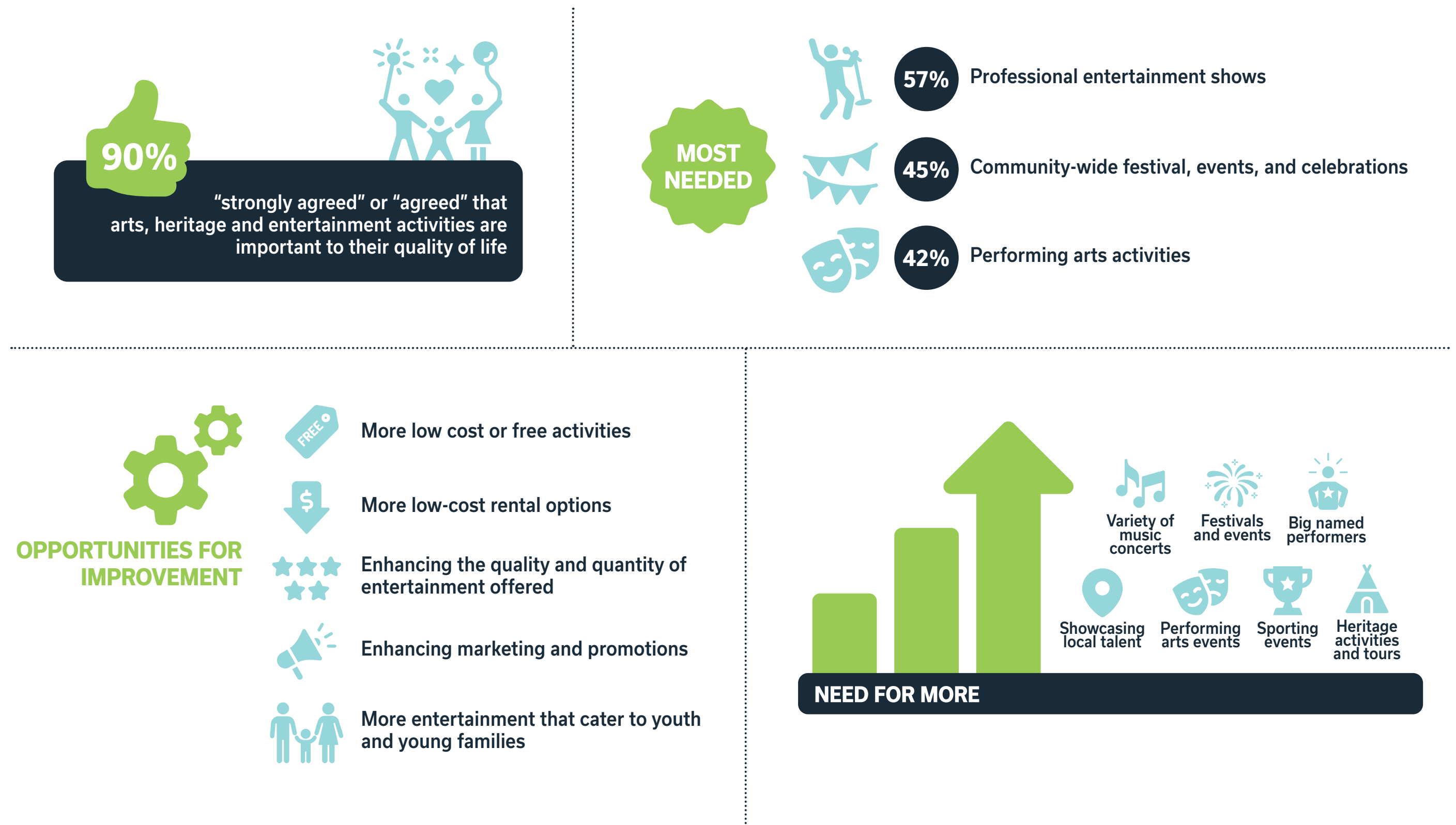
Input from residents, stakeholders, Council, and City Staff was gathered from January 15th to July 11th, 2024. In total, the engagement process produced 731 touchpoints. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of engagement touchpoints by activity.

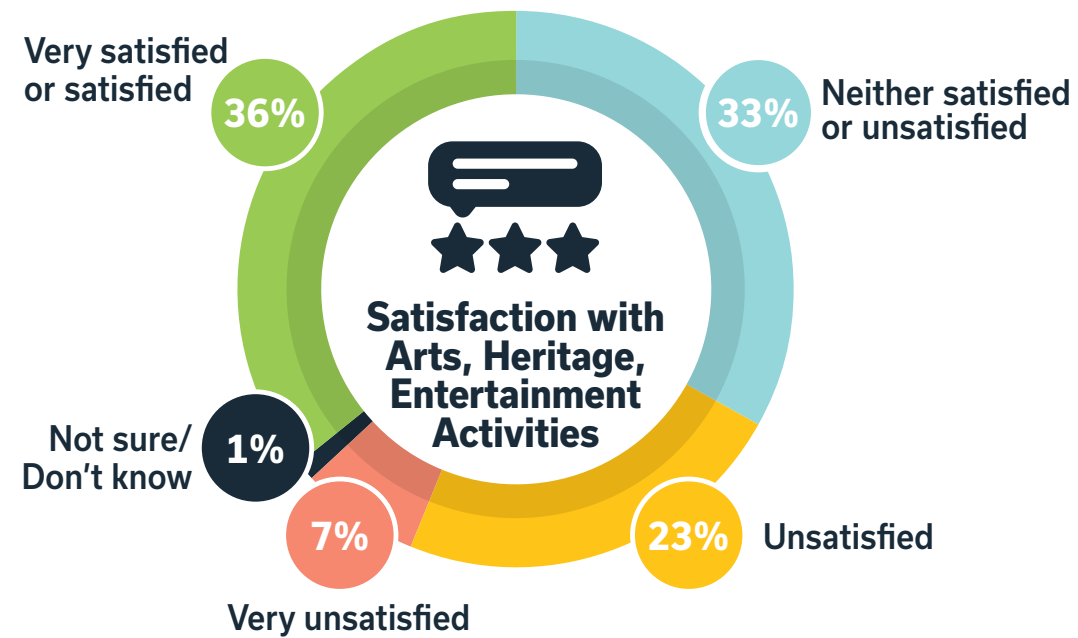
Figure 8. Summary of Engagement Touchpoints

Engagement Activity	Total Engagement
Online Survey	520 responses
Digital Input Workshops	9 attendees
Staff Input Workshop	19 attendees
Youth Engagement Session	8 attendees
Seniors Engagement Session	8 attendees
Pop-up Engagement Stations	152 participants
Interviews	15 completed
Total	731

Key Findings

The following provides a summary of the key findings from the engagement process. To view the expanded engagement results, please see Appendix G. A summary of the feedback collected from the community on the draft plan is also included at the end of Appendix G.



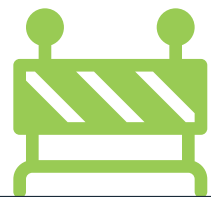


HIGH SATISFACTION

- ✓ Safety and security
- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Quality of activities
- ✓ Welcoming to all community members

LOW SATISFACTION

- ! Marketing and promotions
- ! Diversity of activities
- ! Quantity of activities
- ! Schedule/timing of activities



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- ?? 45% Unaware of activities available
- \$ 41% Too expensive
- 📅 33% Scheduling/timing of activities
- ✗ 31% Activities not offered



BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- More collaboration with the City
- Supporting local organizations in terms of marketing and funding
- Affordable rental spaces for groups
- Enhancing utilization of existing facilities
- Engagement with younger demographics
- Improving marketing and communication efforts



LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

- ✓ Quality of activities
- ✓ Cost to participate
- ✓ Schedule/timing of activities
- ! Quantity of activities
- ! Physical accessibility
- ! Diversity of activities
- ! Marketing and promotions

5

Vision for the Future



There is an opportunity for the sector to move forward in a more strategic and collaborative way. Doing so will enable the diversification of cultural offerings, while also better sustaining existing offerings. It will also maximize the value gained from investments of human and financial resources into the sector made by the City, community groups, and other partners.

Vision for the Future

Our community will work together to sustain and grow the arts, heritage, and entertainment ecosystem that make Medicine Hat an engaging, inclusive, and attractive place to live.

Photo Credits (L-R): RJF Productions, Medicine Hat News, RJF Productions



Outcomes

Through implementation of this plan, we will:

1. Strengthen partnerships between the City and organizations/groups delivering cultural services to the community.
2. Clarify roles in order to reduce competition and amplify opportunities for complementary offerings.
3. Build the capacity of community groups, organizations, and individuals to deliver cultural offerings.
4. Increase participation in cultural offerings, particularly among underserved populations.
5. Promote the diversity of cultural offerings.
6. Preserve and celebrate our histories and heritage.
7. Enhance the quality of life in Medicine Hat by celebrating its heritage, promoting arts and entertainment, and fostering a vibrant, inclusive community that enhances quality of life for residents while attracting newcomers and visitors.

Guiding Principles for Service Delivery

Guiding principles for service delivery were developed to support implementation of the plan. The City of Medicine Hat will:

1. Provide equitable access to facilities, services, and programs which will include a balance between access for:
 - Diverse ages, cultures, abilities, and means
 - Organized groups and the general public
 - Structured and spontaneous activities
 - Professional and amateur pursuits
2. Ensure accessibility and inclusion in all programs, facilities, and services.
3. Operate sustainably so that services remain viable over the long term.
4. Prioritize community engagement and participation in the planning, development, and evaluation of cultural services.
5. Foster strong collaborations and partnerships with local organizations to leverage resources, expertise, and support the delivery of cultural services.
6. Support broader community development, economic development, tourism development, and enhancement to the quality of life in Medicine Hat.

Photo Credits: RJF Productions



6

Priorities





Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

This section outlines the key areas of focus for developing arts, heritage, and entertainment in Medicine Hat. Some of the priorities will take more time to accomplish than others, so the City is encouraged to pursue multiple priorities at the same time, as resources allow.

Priorities have been divided into two categories for organizational purposes (note that the numbering does not indicate priority). These categories include:

1. Program Development
2. Service Delivery Enhancement

It should be recognized that this plan is a non-statutory plan whose purpose is to provide direction and guidance. Implementation of the plan may be impacted by a variety of factors, including Council priorities, available resources, and emerging opportunities/challenges.

It is also important to note that implementation of the plan will be dependent upon the capacity of City staff and collaborating organizations, as well as the resources that may be invested toward moving initiatives forward.

1. Program Development

A. Promote the Diversity of Programming

Engagement with the community uncovered strong demand to promote the diversity of cultural programming in Medicine Hat. Accomplishing this will require service providers to be bold and take occasional risks with their program offerings. The benefits of these efforts will be uncovering new, exciting activities that grow participation, further engage underserved groups, and increase utilization of existing facilities and spaces. Some initial ideas include:

- More day-time programs, especially those targeted at young families.
- Greater diversity in music shows/concerts.
- Encouraging diverse groups to showcase their cultures.
- Indigenous-related programming.
- Offering “relaxed performances”.*
- Offering more heritage activities such as exhibits and tours.
- More performing arts activities such as live theatre, musical theatre, and/or dance.

*The City should consider consulting with theatres who have offered relaxed performances to determine whether this is something that would be operationally feasible for the City to offer in the future.

Relaxed Performances

Relaxed performances offer an accessible option to audience members who may not normally feel comfortable attending a live performance, such as people with sensory concerns, autism spectrum disorders, learning disorders, dementia, families with babies or younger children, or those that may need to be able to leave the theatre frequently during the performance.

Theatres are often dimly lit but not completely dark, there is a relaxed attitude toward audience movement and noise, and there may be some changes in production to reduce startling effects or noises. A relaxed performance allows you to enjoy the show, to be yourself, and to experience live theatre in a friendly and supportive environment.

Source: The Citadel Theatre

Recommendations:

- 1.A.1. Enhance programs to address gaps.
- 1.A.2. Develop and implement plans to offer new cultural programs on an annual basis.
- 1.A.3. Collect community input on a biannual basis to identify emerging cultural interests.

B. Activate Downtown Medicine Hat with Cultural Activity

Medicine Hat's downtown core is a key area of focus for the City's Municipal Development Plan with a vision to create a vibrant downtown and waterfront district. Cultural activity can be a powerful tool to support the achievement of this vision by giving people a reason to visit the downtown.

One way to leverage culture to support activity in the downtown would be by hosting a Biennale event. The main draw of this event would be art installations spread throughout the downtown area in interesting places, such as historic buildings, natural areas, trendy businesses, Towne Square, or underutilized spaces. Such an event could be either planned or supported by the City, with the majority of the programming being provided by community groups, businesses, or other partners.

Another opportunity would be hosting a decentralized arts and culture event(s) in the downtown. The decentralized approach entails spreading out events geographically (i.e. by utilizing multiple locations) and over time (i.e. by running an event over multiple weekends or during the week). This can serve to reduce or mitigate the challenges associated with organizing and delivering large-scale events that happen over the course of only one or two days. Another benefit is that decentralized events can serve to spread event-related programming and activity more broadly throughout the community, while also extending the timeframe over which audiences can enjoy events.

Recommendations:

- 1.B.1. Explore the opportunity to develop a Biennale event.
- 1.B.2. Implement decentralized event approaches in the downtown.

C. Offer Reimagined Programming for Youth

The engagement process identified gaps in cultural programming for youth. In today's fast moving and highly connected society, interests can change rapidly. This is especially true for youth. Innovative, non-traditional programs should be explored, such as digital art lessons, creator classes, e-sport training camps, and other activities that capture the spirit of the day.

Recommendations:

- 1.C.1. Develop and implement program plans to directed at programming for youth.
- 1.C.2. Collect input on an annual basis to identify emerging youth interests.

D. Enhance Programming for Young Adults

Young adults are a crucial demographic for ensuring the vibrancy and economic health of communities. The engagement process indicated that current cultural offerings are not engaging this important demographic as much as they could be. Providing programming that appeals to young adults will help make the case for them to stay in the community and may contribute toward attracting new young adults to Medicine Hat.

E. Encourage Indigenous Programming

Indigenous stories and histories are showcased in Medicine Hat through several Indigenous-related facilities, programs, and events. However, there is recognition that more can be done to celebrate, interpret, and share Indigenous cultures.

F. Increase Community Access to Co-op Place

The City has determined that offering up to six entertainment offerings per year at Co-op Place strikes the right balance between meeting community needs and ensuring fiscal responsibility.³⁶ However, opportunities to increase community access to Co-op Place are worthwhile to explore. The City could consider hosting low-impact, community-focused events in Co-op Place. The City could also encourage rentals from community groups that offer programming for residents. Additional programming could also be considered, such as hosting a mini Fringe Festival, dance competitions, e-sport tournaments, powwow events, trade shows, or incorporating art installations into the building and transforming it into a temporary gallery space.

Recommendations:

- 1.D.1. Develop and implement program plans directed at programming for young adults.
- 1.D.2. Engage with the Sport and Event Council to explore opportunities to attract events that appeal to young adults.

Recommendations:

- 1.E.1. Work with the Miywasin Friendship Centre to further encourage programming at the Saamis Tepee.
- 1.E.2. Encourage interpretation of Indigenous histories and cultures throughout the community.
- 1.E.3. Support Indigenous-led narratives and programming where possible.

Recommendations:

- 1.F.1. Develop a program plan to increase community access to Co-op Place.

G.Support Event Development and Delivery

Events are one of the main ways that culture is sustained and shared in the community. The City of Medicine Hat provides specific event hosting guidelines and requirements to prospective event producers; however, more can be done to support event development and delivery. For example, developing a user-friendly tool that encourages community event planners and gives them the direction they need to plan their event would support event development. Event hosting processes and policies could also be reviewed for opportunities to streamline them.

Recommendations:

- 1.G.1. Develop a user-friendly event hosting tool to guide community event producers.
- 1.G.2. Review the City's event hosting process and policies for opportunities to streamline and clarify them.
- 1.G.3. Consider developing a community-wide Events Strategy to establish a vision for events, clarify roles, and guide decisions.

H.Leverage Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment to Support Tourism Goals

The two main ways that arts, heritage, and entertainment can be leveraged to support tourism goals is through marketing and product development. On the marketing side, greater collaboration and coordination between the City, Tourism Medicine Hat, and community organizations that provide cultural services, could lead to more effective marketing campaigns that fully showcase what Medicine Hat has to offer. On the product development side, more can be done to design and package cultural offerings to make them attractive to visitors. Research shows that Albertans are receptive to collaborative offers that provide unique combinations of experiences.³⁷ One high potential opportunity would be developing pre- and post-show packages for shows at the Esplanade and Co-op Place to extend visitor stays and increase spending.

Recommendations:

- 1.H.1. Encourage cultural service providers in the community to connect with Tourism Medicine Hat and incorporate their visitor and market ready experiences into marketing efforts.
- 1.H.2. In partnership with Tourism Medicine Hat, provide tourism experience and package development training to stakeholders who can play a role in developing new tourism product.
- 1.H.3. Encourage experience providers to package complementary offerings together to create attractive single and multi-day experiences that will incentivize travel to Medicine Hat.
- 1.H.4. Develop destination animation programs that leverage cultural offerings targeted at key tourism areas during need periods to draw visitors in.
- 1.H.5. Encourage anchor attractions/events to develop new tourism-related products that will attract target markets.

Art in Motion
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

2. Service Delivery Enhancement

A. Involve the Community in Implementation

There is an opportunity to further leverage Medicine Hat's passion for arts, heritage, and entertainment by involving community members and groups alongside municipal staff in implementation of the plan. One way to do this is to strike an ad hoc Implementation Committee.* The purpose of this multistakeholder committee would be to work towards implementing the initiatives described in this Plan. It is envisioned that this will also serve to increase broader collaboration within the sector.

*An ad hoc committee is established for a limited duration of time for a specific purpose. Once the task has been achieved, the committee is dissolved.

Recommendations:

2.A.1. Strike an Implementation Committee.

B. Strengthen Collaboration within the Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Sector

The following initiatives will serve to strengthen collaboration within Medicine Hat's arts, heritage, and entertainment sector.

Cultural Forum

A Cultural Forum would bring municipal staff, community groups, engaged residents, institutions, businesses, and advisory committees such as the Heritage Resource Working Group together so that they can share their plans for the upcoming year, identify opportunities to support/complement each other, and avoid competition. It is envisioned that the Forum would be a highly engaging event that would serve as a rallying point for cultural stakeholders. Opportunities for networking and presenting what stakeholders are working on could be incorporated into the agenda. Ideally, the event would be hosted at rotating culture-related locations throughout Medicine Hat to showcase what the community has to offer. The City should consider hosting Cultural Forums annually to report on successes, describe upcoming initiatives, increase communication and collaboration, and energize stakeholders in the sector.

Community Cultural Liaison/Facilitator

The City could take a more active role in supporting community groups to develop and provide new cultural programming that responds to identified needs. The City can support this approach by assigning the role of a Community Cultural Liaison/Facilitator to an existing staff member. This role would help service providers in the community develop and deliver their own programs and events. The Liaison/Facilitator would provide a "one-door-in" approach and single point of contact at the City for these groups, which is currently a gap. The Liaison/Facilitator would act in a consultative and mentorship role with community service providers helping to build their capacity. The role would also be responsible for communicating the City's programming direction, educating organizations on City grant programs and processes, and sharing plans with stakeholders in order to avoid service duplication and competition. It will be essential that this staff member builds strong relationships with service providers. The role would fulfill an important "connector" function, ensuring that the community as a whole is well positioned to respond to demand for cultural activities. The staff member would also have a significant role in developing support resources recommended in this plan and rolling them out to the community.

Recommendations:

- 2.B.1. Host an annual Cultural Forum.
- 2.B.2. Assign the role of a Community Cultural Liaison/Facilitator to a City staff member.



Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

C. Enhance Marketing and Promotions

Marketing and promotions received the lowest levels of satisfaction among respondents to the community survey. Additionally, being “unaware of activities available” (45%) was the most common barrier to participating more often.

Recommendations:

- 2.C.1. Develop an annual marketing plan for the City’s cultural offerings. Incorporate multiple channels to engage a wide variety of audiences and consider allocating increased resources to marketing efforts to get greater reach.
- 2.C.2. Employ low-cost, organic marketing tactics (such as generating high quality social media content) that will help further connect audiences to arts, heritage and entertainment experiences and enhance brand awareness.
- 2.C.3. Develop an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Program Guide. It is recommended that programming be organized by activity type, rather than by facility.
- 2.C.4. Develop a Marketing Guide that community groups can use to help them leverage available channels to promote their programs/events.
- 2.C.5. Ensure City-led events are posted on Tourism Medicine Hat’s events calendar.
- 2.C.6. Improve coordination between City staff and Tourism Medicine Hat to ensure marketing for offerings, especially large concerts and events, fully leverage available channels and avoids duplication.



Ice Carving
Photo Credit: RJF Productions



Brendan McLeod
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

D. Develop an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card

The City of Medicine Hat would benefit from the development of an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card. The report card would highlight annual accomplishments of the City, community partners, and volunteers, and include useful qualitative and quantitative measures to help readers understand the positive impact cultural services are having in the community. Importantly, a report card would serve to fill the current performance measurement gap, and it would enable the community to better evaluate the success of its cultural services. Such a report card would be a useful tool for City staff to communicate its work to Council and the community, and can be used as an input toward future planning.

Given that the respective purposes/mandates of arts, heritage, and entertainment varies, consideration should be put toward tailoring indicators and benchmarks to properly align. For example, heritage can have significant intangible values that are best measured qualitatively, such as cultural identity, education, community cohesion, and historical awareness. Alternatively, the value of entertainment can often be measured quantitatively through indicators such as attendance, ticket prices, revenue, and cost recovery.

Performance measures are included at the end of this section that could be used to form the basis of a report card. Appendix H contains a list of additional quantitative and qualitative measures that the City can consider using to measure performance of specific programs and events.

Investment Per Participant Metric

A useful metric that the City could consider for inclusion in either its report card or internal reporting is the amount of investment the City provides per participant in its cultural programs and facilities. This metric would give the City an understanding of what level of tax support (if any in some cases) is needed to support the cultural services it delivers to the community.

Calculating the metric is a straightforward formula whereby the amount of tax support the program or facility requires is divided by the number of participants. Determining the number of participants should be an easy exercise (e.g. attendance, ticket sales, registrations, etc.), whereas determining the amount of tax support will require deeper analysis. At a high level, tax support is calculated by finding the difference between revenues and expenses. If the difference is negative, then tax support is required. The key to this analysis is recognizing and accounting for all relevant revenues and expenses. For example, the City may choose to incorporate some, or all, of the following items related to a cultural program it offers at one of its facilities:

Revenues:

- Registration fees
- Allocation for advertising, sponsorship, membership, merchandise, donations, and grant revenues

Expenses:

- Direct program expenses (e.g. materials, equipment, space rental, program staff)
- Allocation for support staff expenses (e.g. bookings, marketing, supervision, etc.)
- Allocation for facility operational expenses (e.g. staffing, utilities, maintenance, etc.)
- Allocation for facility capital expenses (e.g. repairs, replacement, debenture payments, etc.)

Whichever expenses the City chooses to include in its calculation, it will be important that a consistent methodology is applied to ensure comparability between the results.

Recommendations:

- 2.D.1. Develop an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card and update/report on it annually.
- 2.D.2. Conduct investment per participant analysis on the City's cultural programs and facilities.



Anne of Green Gables
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

E. Support Financial Accessibility

Engagement with the community identified demand for more low cost or free activities. Furthermore, “Too expensive” was the second most common barrier to participation as reported by survey respondents. The City should consider taking the following actions to support financial accessibility, as resources allow.

Recommendations:

- 2.E.1. Offer more free or low cost activities.
- 2.E.2. Consider expanding “pay what you want” pricing strategies.
- 2.E.3. Consider enhancing the Fair Entry program to enable more low income families and individuals to participate in activities.
- 2.E.4. Develop a funding opportunities guide for community cultural service providers and work with them to develop funding plans that enhance their financial sustainability and better enable them to offer activities at low or no cost to participants.

F. Policy Enhancements

The policy analysis, along with the review of trends and findings from engagement, identified gaps and informed the development of potential future updates that would enhance the City’s culture-related policies (see Appendix D for the full list).

Recommendations:

- 2.F.1. Update the City’s culture-related policies as described in Appendix D.

G. Volunteer Development

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector in Medicine Hat. The City provides a platform on its website where residents can access information about volunteer opportunities at Co-op Place and the Esplanade. Additionally, there are various advisory boards and committees related to arts, heritage, and entertainment that residents can join. The City should regularly assess its volunteer capacity and explore ways to broaden its volunteer network.

Recommendations:

- 2.G.1. Regularly monitor and evaluate the City’s volunteer roster.
- 2.G.2. Develop an onboarding volunteer training plan to establish clear roles, responsibilities, and benefits.
- 2.G.3. Collect ongoing volunteer feedback to improve systems.
- 2.G.4. Celebrate and recognize the contribution of volunteers in the sector. Examples may include discounts on programs or volunteer appreciation events.
- 2.G.5. Facilitate youth volunteerism in the sector. Recruitment strategies may include social media or advertising at local schools.

Top 5 Actions

The following actions have been identified as the top priorities of the plan. They are listed in a recommended order of priority. This priority list and all components of the plan are for planning purposes only and will be subject to annual budget approvals and ongoing planning efforts from the City and their partners. Activities may be added, removed, or re-ordered based on the needs of the community during implementation.



1 Strike an Implementation Committee.



2 Strengthen collaboration within the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector.



3 Encourage the diversity of cultural programming, especially for youth, young adults, and Indigenous people.



4 Enhance marketing and promotions.



5 Develop an Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card.



Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Implementation and Evaluation Framework

Organizational Lead and Roles

The City of Medicine Hat will take the lead role in implementing the plan. The City is encouraged to seek partnerships with community groups, partner institutions, and other applicable groups wherever possible to leverage available resources. Residents can also be engaged through committees to help contribute to implementation.

The following roles are recommended in relation to delivering arts, heritage, and entertainment services in Medicine Hat.

City of Medicine Hat:

- Sustainably operate and maintain the City's cultural facilities.
- Support community-driven programming and events. This can be accomplished by providing affordable spaces for activities to occur, building the capacity of groups to provide programming, or in some cases providing funding support.
- Provide programming that responds to community interests and demand. It is envisioned that the City's programming will complement community-driven programming and serve to fill gaps that are not or cannot be well served by other service providers (e.g. professional level shows, archival services).

Community Organizations, Institutions, and Businesses:

- Operate and maintain their cultural facilities.
- Provide programming that responds to community interests and demand.
- Liaise with the City's arts, heritage, and entertainment staff to ensure strong collaboration and coordination.

Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of the plan will be the evaluation of its initiatives. The plan should be reviewed annually, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur in reference to performance measures. If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the plan progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the plan. The plan should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth quarter, the updated plan should be formalized, and a draft approved by the end of the year. A fulsome update of the plan may be needed after year five of implementation.

Implementation Considerations

The plan identifies several priorities and supporting recommendations. Attempting to complete all initiatives concurrently will stretch the resources and limit the focus of the community as it implements the plan. Therefore, it is recommended that implementation of the plan begins with the highest priority initiatives.

Implementation Workflow

The workflow graphic below provides a high-level overview of how the plan will be implemented.



Performance Measures

The City of Medicine Hat can use the following measures to track performance during implementation of the plan. Exact numbers and percentages should be added to each performance measure once benchmarks have been developed. These performance measures could be included as part of the City's Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Report Card.

Focus Area	Performance Measures	Measurement Tools	Measurement Value
Social Measures	1.1 Increased utilization of cultural facilities.	User statistics Capacity analysis	% Growth % Utilization
	1.2 Increased cultural programming available to the community.	Program plans	# of Programs (City and community led) Diversity of programs
	1.3 Strong support for arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings in the community.	Resident and participant surveys	% Support
	1.4 Cultural activities positively impact individual and community wellness.	Resident and participant surveys	% Positive impact
	1.5 Cultural facilities and programs demonstrate a high level of accessibility and inclusion.	Accessibility audits User surveys	Accessibility score % Satisfaction Demographics
Economic Measures	2.1 Cost per user targets are achieved.	Cost per user analysis	% Target realization
	2.2 Increased revenue from programs/rentals/events.	Revenue tracking	% Growth
	2.3 The department achieves budget targets.	Dept. budget	% Target realization
	2.4 Cost control measures in place.	Expense tracking	% Target realization
	2.5 Increased market reach and awareness.	Resident and participant surveys	% Market growth % Awareness
	2.6 Increased participation from visitors in arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings.	Attendance tracking	# of Visitors
	2.7 Increased tourism-related receipts.	Business survey	Visitor spending
Organizational Measures	3.1 The department is appropriately staffed to successfully deliver programs and run facility operations.	Staffing complement Staff survey	% Satisfaction
	3.2 Facility and program performance are reviewed annually.	Annual report	% Target realization % Growth
	3.3 Improved support is offered to community organizations.	Community group survey	% Satisfaction

7

Conclusion



Rise Up Festival
Photo Credit: RJF Productions

The Plan puts forward a strategic direction that will guide the community toward its vision of leveraging arts, heritage, and entertainment to make Medicine Hat an engaging, inclusive, and attractive place to live. Achieving this vision will require ongoing investment, a high degree of coordination and collaboration between partners, and strong creativity. Through implementing this plan, Medicine Hat will increase participation in arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings, build its capacity to deliver cultural offerings, and enhance overall quality of life for residents.

Appendices

Appendix A – Expanded Program and Facility Inventory Analysis

Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Programs and Events:

Professional Entertainment Shows

Medicine Hat is home to a variety of professional entertainment shows. The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre offers a variety of entertainment, showcasing performances by artists like Tim Smith, George Littlechild, Jae Sterling, Neil McClelland, and many more.

Co-op Place also brings professional shows to the city, including the Harlem Globetrotters World Tour, Cirque Musica Holiday Wonderland, PBR: Medicine Hat Classic, and artists such as Bryan Adams, and Sam Roberts Band and the Strumbellas.

During the Medicine Hat Stampede, the Stampede Summer Jam has performances by various artists. Furthermore, other performances have been hosted in Medicine Hat including the Great Benjamin Circus.

Community-wide Festivals, Events, and Celebrations

Medicine Hat is home to several annual community festivals and celebrations, many of which are multi-day and multi-faceted offerings. Events are hosted and supported by a variety of organizations including the Esplanade, Medicine Hat Stampede and Exhibition Association, Medicine Hat College, Miywasin Friendship Centre, Medicine Hat Folk Club, and Medicine Hat Rotary Club. They take place at varied facilities including the Big Go Marble Centre, Kin Coulee Park, Police Point Park, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medalta, and at the Medicine Hat College. Events are focused on arts, heritage and culture, and include:

- Medicine Hat Art In Motion (Esplanade Heritage and Arts Centre, various locations)
- Olde Tyme Christmas Fair and Christmas Farmers Market (Medicine Hat Stampede and Exhibition Association/Grounds)
- Medicine Hat Culture Days (Big Go Marble Centre)
- The Spectrum Festival (Kin Coulee Park)
- Alberta Culture Days (Miywasin Friendship Centre, Police Point Park)
- Rise Up Hot Air Balloon Festival (private individuals + non-profit)
- Metis Week (Medicine Hat College)
- Medicine Hat Jazz Festival
- Medicine Hat Rotary Music Festival
- Tongue on the Post (Medicine Hat Folk Club)

Performing Arts Activities

Medicine Hat offers a variety of performing arts activities. The Medicine Hat Conservatory provides choral programs and private music lessons, while the Medicine Hat School of Performing Arts offers a range of programs, including Mini Bopper, non-competitive, competitive, and musical theatre options.

Medicine Hat is also home to several dance performances. The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre has showcased events like Dance Invasion and Diamond Dance Xtreme. The McConnel School of Highland Dance, the largest studio in Southeastern Alberta specializing in Highland Dance, regularly performs in the community.³⁸ Infinity Dance, located in the Medicine Hat Cultural Centre, offers a variety of dance classes, including ballet, jazz, tap, acro, lyrical, musical theatre, hip hop, and contemporary.³⁹

Additionally, the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat Musical Theatre Playhouse, Crescent Heights High School, and Medicine Hat High School all contribute to the city's performing arts scene by hosting a variety of theatre performances.

Heritage Activities

Heritage programming is largely provided by the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre and Medalta. Both offer guided and self-guided tours. Historical exhibits can be found at Medalta and at local museums including at the Esplanade and South Alberta Light Horse Regiment Museum. Additionally, the Miywasin Friendship Centre offers a variety of Indigenous activities.

- Historic Walking Tours (Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre)
- Museum (Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre)
- South Alberta Light Horse (SALH) Regiment Museum
- Medalta Guided Tours (Medalta)
- Traditional Trails Program (Miywasin Friendship Centre)

- Parent Drop-In Support Sharing Circles Program (Miywasin Friendship Centre)
- Filling Our Tipis Program (Miywasin Friendship Centre)
- Medicine Wheel Program (Miywasin Friendship Centre)
- Medicine Hat Interpretative Program (Society of Grasslands Naturalists)

Visual Arts Activities

The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre and Big Marble Go Centre offer several visual art and craft programs catering to different age groups and skill levels. Additionally, the Esplanade's Discovery Zone offers educational programming and targets a diverse audience interested in exploring different art mediums and techniques. Visual arts activities offered at the Esplanade and Big Marble Go Centre include:

Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre:

- PD Days
- Acrylic Alchemy
- Felting Fundamental
- Art Days
- Youth Art Class
- Easter Break Art Days
- Winter Art Classes
- Sensory Art Classes

Big Marble Go Centre:

- Arts & Crafts for kids and youth.

There are also a variety of community organizations who offer visual arts activities, workshops, and programs including Medalta, Hat Art Club, Potters Club, Medicine Hat Public Library, Medicine Hat College, TREX Space, and private studios. Programs offered by these organizations include:

- Pottery classes for adults and children (Medalta)
- Summer programs (Medalta)
- Art workshops (Medalta)
- Geometric Pyrography Painting (Hat Art Club)
- Drawing from the Right Side of the Brain (Hat Art Club)
- Overcome the Fear of Watercolour (Hat Art Club)
- Sidewalk Blossoms (Hat Art Club)
- Beauty of Autumn Colours with Soft Chalks and Oil Pastels (Hat Art Club)
- Pottery Workshops/Classes (Potters Club)
- Painting week (Medicine Hat Public Library)
- Fibre Arts Week (Medicine Hat Public Library)
- Paper Arts Week (Medicine Hat Public Library)
- Art and Design Program (Medicine Hat College)
- One-on-One Gallery Exhibits (Medicine Hat College)
- Travelling Exhibitions (TREX Space)
- Visiting Artist Program (TREX Space)

Sport Events

Local sporting events are hosted by numerous organizations and facilities. Organizations include a mix of public, private and non-profit entities such as Medicine Hat College, the Medicine Hat Tigers, Medicine Hat Mavericks, and the Medicine Hat Skateboard Association. Hosting facilities include Co-op Place, the Moose Recreation Centre, Medicine Hat Drag Strip, as well as trails throughout the community. Hockey, volleyball, baseball and basketball games are on offer, as are drag racing, car racing, a skateboard competition, roller derby, and numerous running races.

- Medicine Hat Tigers Hockey Games (Co-op Place, Medicine Hat Tigers/private)
- Medicine Hat College Rattlers Volleyball, Basketball, and Hockey Games (Moose Recreation Centre/City of Medicine Hat Facility)
- Cornhole Tournaments (Badlands Cornhole Medicine Hat)
- Gas City Roller Derby (Gas City Roller Derby Association)
- Rise Up Hot Air Balloon Festival (private/non-profit event)
- Medicine Hat Mavericks Baseball Games (Athletic Park)
- Drag Racing (Medicine Hat Drag Strip)
- Car Racing (Medicine Hat Speedway)
- Demolition Derby (Medicine Hat Speedway)
- Beat the Heat Skateboard Competition (Medicine Hat Skateboard Association)
- Conquer the Coulee Trail Race (one of a number of annual trail races)

Film/Movie Screenings

Medicine Hat has a selection of venues that offer film and movie screenings. The Monarch Theatre is the oldest operating movie theatre in Western Canada and offers movies every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.⁴⁰ The Medicine Hat Public Library hosts family films and classic movies in its theatre. The Library also has a program called Readers' Theatre, where seniors in the community come together to read scripts of plays. Additionally, Medicine Hat is home to other movie venues such as Galaxy Cinemas.

Food and Beverage Events

The community hosts many food and beverage events, both small and large. There are many providers, including Tourism Medicine Hat, the Medicine Hat Stampede and Exhibition Grounds, and private organizations and businesses such as local ranches, breweries and distilleries. Events include the following:

- Downtown Bakery Tour (Tourism Medicine Hat)
- Sunshine Cafe and Market Tour (Tourism Medicine Hat)
- Oktoberfest (Medicine Hat Brewing Company)
- Cocktails and Constellations (Tourism Medicine Hat, Grit City Distillery, Eagles Nest Ranch)
- Alberta Food and Beverage Expo (Medicine Hat Stampede and Exhibition Grounds)
- Medicine Hat Rib Fest (privately sponsored)
- Seasonal Farmers Market (Medicine Hat Stampede and Exhibition Grounds)
- Dinner in the Kiln
- Dining in the Dark

Rodeos and Agricultural Events

The Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Association offers a diverse range of rodeos and agricultural events including:

- Beef Pen Show
- Broncs & Honky Tonks Rodeo
- Indian Relay Racing
- WPCA Chuckwagon Races

Additionally, the Medicine Hat Stampede is an annual summer event located at the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede. There are a variety of activities and events that take place during the Stampede event including:

- All Breed Horse Show
- Free Stage Entertainment
- Methanex Kiddies Day
- Night Shows
- Parade
- Stampede Summer Jam
- Summer Pro Rodeo
- Tradeshow
- Midway

Medicine Hat College Centre for Innovation has also hosted agricultural events including a four-hour agriculture awareness event on campus.

City-Owned Facilities:

Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre is a prominent cultural venue in the community. This \$32 million facility opened in 2005 and spans 115,000 square feet. It features a museum, 700-seat main stage theatre, and a 150-seat studio theatre. Additionally, it includes an art gallery, an archive, gift shop, and a café.^{41,42}

Co-op Place: This facility has been a focal point for sports and entertainment in the City ever since it opened in 2015. It is the home arena for the WHL Medicine Hat Tigers, and it also hosts concerts and events. The venue is 197,895 square feet with a seating capacity of 7,000 people. There are 350 club seats, 22 suites, 8 loge boxes, 2 community suites, and a lounge available for public rental.⁴³

Big Marble Go Centre: The Big Marble Go Centre is a large multipurpose recreation facility. The facility is home to an aquatic park which includes a lazy river, leisure wave pool, tot pool, hot tub, steam room, 25m lane swim pool, variable depth pool, and dive tank. The facility also has an Olympic-sized ice arena, a twin field house, gymnasium, fitness centre, and a walking track. The Centre also serves as a venue for short track speedskating events.⁴⁴

The Heritage Pavilion: The Heritage Pavilion features two main event spaces. First is a 1,700 square-foot lower-level patio that can host up to 120 guests. Second is a 1,100 square-foot main floor which can host up to 65 guests. The spaces offer flexibility for a wide range of occasions ensuring that both indoor and outdoor events can be seamlessly hosted at the venue.⁴⁵

Medicine Hat Cultural Centre: This centre is located on the Medicine Hat College campus and offers diverse space for cultural activities, including a black box theatre. There is bleacher seating and flexible floorspace for performances and events. The centre also features a craft photo room and a dance floor.⁴⁶

Saamis Tepee and Archeological Site: Constructed in 1988 for the Calgary Winter Olympics, The Saamis Tepee is the world's largest tepee. The Tepee features ten masts with storyboards of native culture and history. Below the Tepee is the Saamis Archeological Site, which is an important historic site of the Northern Plains. It offers historical preservation and cultural stories for the community and visitors to recognize the importance of Indigenous history in Canada.⁴⁷

Towne Square/Downtown: Towne Square is an outdoor venue designed for community gatherings and events. Featuring a modern open canopy design, the Square offers eight market pods and two parking lots available for rent. It serves as a hub for residents and visitors to gather.⁴⁸

Riverside Veteran's Memorial Park Bandshell: Located across from City Hall and overlooking the South Saskatchewan River, this park serves as a scenic and accessible outdoor venue. Amenities include a bandshell/theatre for performances and a picnic area for leisurely gatherings. This picturesque setting provides a space for many cultural events in the City.⁴⁹

Kin Coulee Bandshell: The Kin Coulee Bandshell is a large entertainment space frequently used for concerts, church services, and community celebrations. It features available power, a wheelchair-accessible ramp, and nearby washrooms.⁵⁰

Non-City-Owned Facilities:

Medalta Historic Clay District: Medalta Historic Clay District is 150 acres serving as an innovative industrial museum, contemporary ceramic arts facility, art gallery, and community hub. Operating within a converted century-old factory of national historic significance it offers educational and community programs. The reception gallery is 50 feet by 100 feet with a maximum seated capacity of 200 people or 60-inch round tables.^{51,52}

Medicine Hat Exhibitions and Stampede: Established in 1887 this facility has evolved from a rodeo grounds into an expansive cultural and heritage space in the City. The main event hosted at the grounds is the annual Exhibition & Stampede. With 10 facilities available for rent, the venue can accommodate up to 1,500 guests. This facility bridges the gap between urban and rural entertainment offerings and educational experiences for residents and visitors.⁵³

Eresman Theatre: Situated within the Medicine Hat College campus this space serves as a versatile venue for events and performances. The theatre has 506 fixed seating options along with 6 designated wheelchair spaces. There are 27 accessible and overflow spaces available to allow for more seating options.⁵⁴

Medicine Hat Public Library: Operated by the Library Board Corporation the Medicine Hat Library serves a community space for education and programs. It features a theatre with fixed seating for 152 people and a training room equipped with 9 computers. The Honor Currie Room accommodates 80 standing or 60 fixed seating. The Royal Canadian Legion Room has a capacity of 30. Committed to providing equitable access, the facility aims to educate, enrich, entertain, and inform residents, with a focus on fostering community engagement and learning.^{55,56}

The Monarch Theatre: Opened in 1911 the Monarch Theatre stands as Canada's oldest surviving purpose-built movie theater and is planned to reopen in 2024. With a capacity of 560 seats it offers a historic cinematic experience. The theater continues to be a cultural landmark preserving legacy while providing modern entertainment to the community through the rotary club.⁵⁷

Medicine Hat Musical Theatre Playhouse: The Medicine Hat Musical Theatre Playhouse is located on 10 Avenue S.W. The venue has undergone significant upgrades including the installation of a proscenium arch. The theatre features 100 seats and has been updated with newer seating, as well as art sound, and lighting systems.⁵⁸

Crescent Heights High School Theatre: Crescent Heights High School, located on Division Ave N, features a 310-seat theatre. The school hosts a variety of productions and has one of the largest drama programs in North America for a public school.⁵⁹

Medicine Hat High School Performing Arts Centre: The Medicine Hat High School Performing Arts Centre is located at Medicine Hat High School on 7 Street SW. The theatre features 242 seats and is available for community rentals.⁶⁰

TREX Space: It is a public art gallery that is also the headquarters for TREX Southeast which is one of four regional partners for managing the Alberta Foundation of the Arts (AFA) Travelling Exhibition program. This space is committed to accessible artworks for Albertans. It is a one room ground floor gallery.⁶¹

Be Youth Centre: A charitable non-profit established in 1997, it provides a welcoming space open to all youth aged 11-17. The center gives local youth the chance to explore new activities, socialize and engage with their community through free social-recreational programming. This inclusive approach fosters a supportive environment where young people can build friendships, develop skills and participate in meaningful experiences.⁶²

Miywasin Friendship Centre: The Miywasin Friendship Centre was established in 1997. The three-story apartment building is located in downtown Medicine Hat. The main and lower levels house offices and programs, while the second and third floors consist of 16 suites.⁶³ This non-profit centre offers vital programs to support local Indigenous people.

South Alberta Light Horse (SALH) Regiment Museum: Established in 2005 and located in the Patterson Armoury, this site serves as a platform for presenting the history and progress of the regiment. It emphasizes the community connections of locals who have served in the regiment. Operated by the non-profit SALH Regiment Foundation, the museum's day-to-day operations are carried out by volunteers dedicated to preserving the legacy of the regiment and its ties to the local community.⁶⁴

Appendix B – Expanded Utilization and Capacity Analysis

Figure 9. Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre Attendees Numbers (2016-2023)

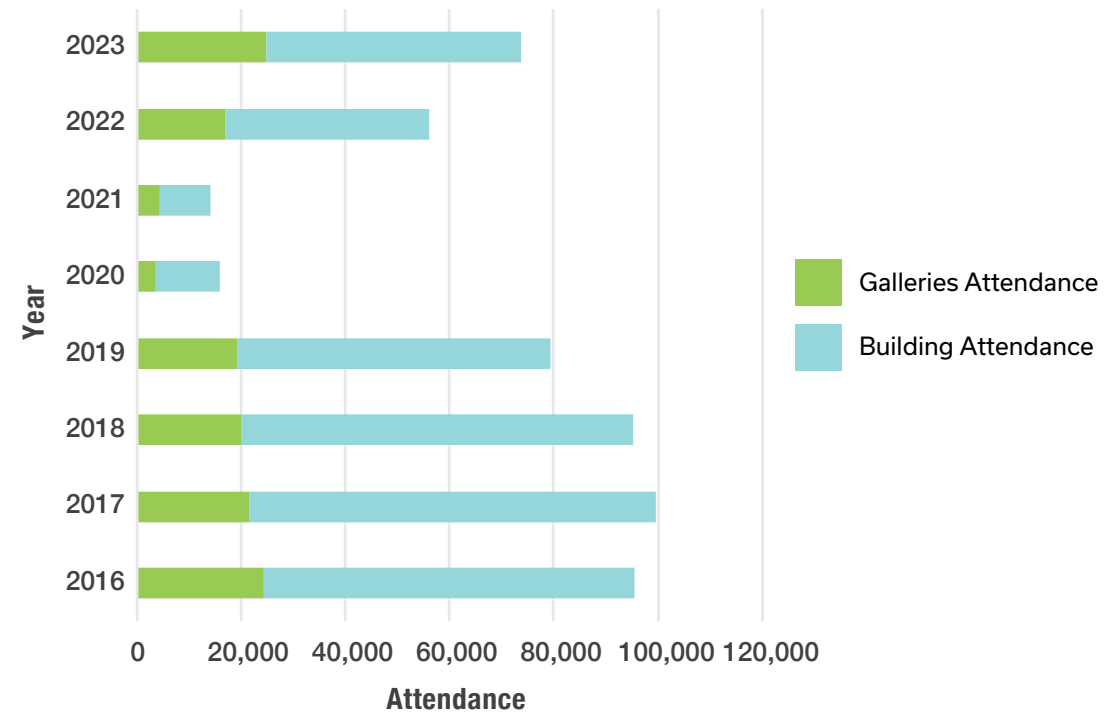
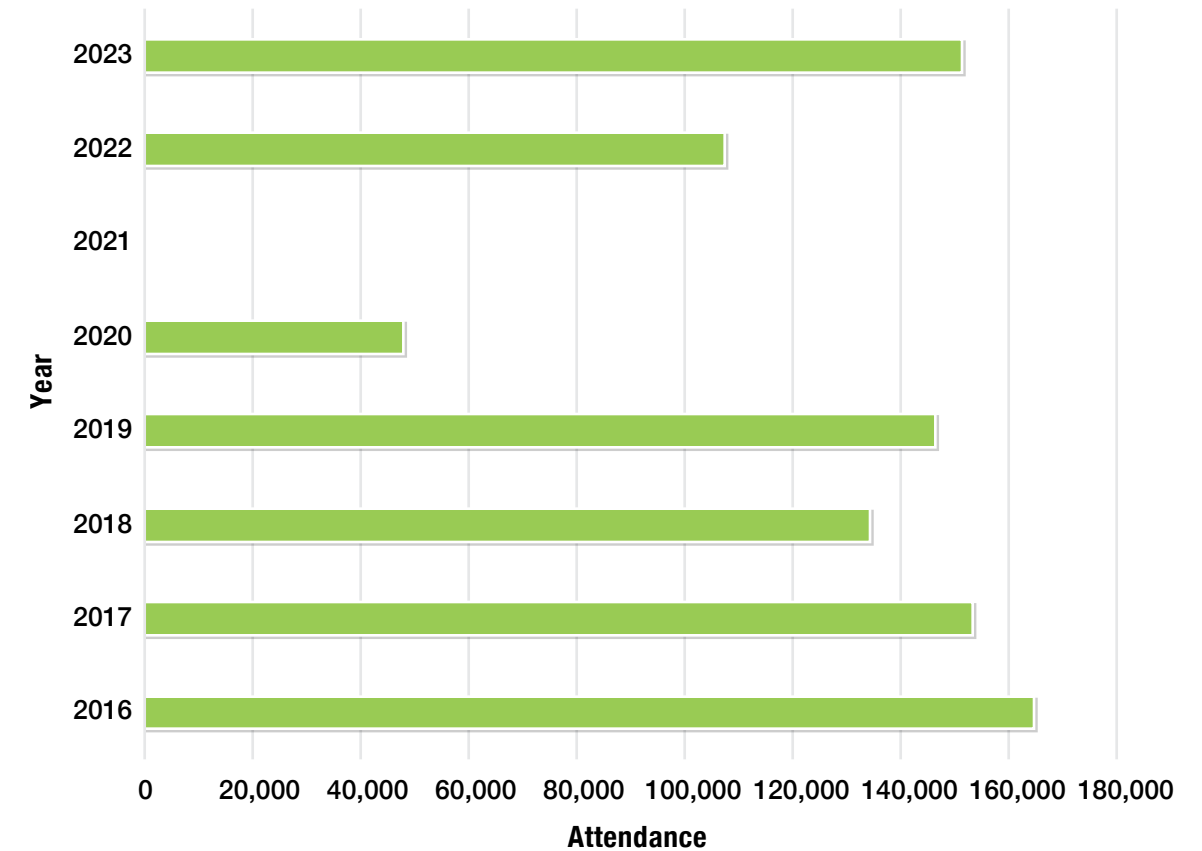


Figure 10. Co-op Place Attendance Numbers (2016-2023)



Notes:

- Galleries attendance includes Pay What You Will, volunteers, school tours, art classes, pre-theatre, archives, programming and events.
- Building attendance includes theatre tickets, number of performers, volunteers, non-ticketed events, and facility bookings.

Appendix C – Expanded Strategic Alignment Analysis

Medicine Hat City Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Outlines City Council's strategic priorities and related actions for Administration through 2026. Those most aligned with arts, heritage, and entertainment include:

- Economic Evolution: A strong, diversified regional economy and an economic ecosystem that encourages entrepreneurship.
 - Related action:
 - Identify and understand our comparative advantages as a City, community and region and rapidly capitalize on those advantages.
- Community Wellbeing: People will love living and being in our City. Our community will be vibrant and lifelong residents and newcomers alike, from all walks of life, will feel a sense of security and belonging in Medicine Hat.
 - Related actions:
 - Take meaningful action to support the physical, mental, and emotional health of our community, including providing, supporting, and facilitating opportunities for arts and culture, education, and literacy as well as physical activities.
 - Ensure that the City's actions reflect our commitment to honouring the Indigenous people in Medicine Hat and their past, present and future.
 - Continue to develop a downtown that is vibrant, safe and welcoming and that is a destination for people of all ages.

myMH Master Plan (Medicine Hat Municipal Development Plan)

Establishes a vision for the city in 2050 and identifies strategic development goals to realize the vision. Strategic goals most aligned to arts, heritage and entertainment include:

- A vibrant downtown including an active and enhanced waterfront development district, with opportunities for business and leisure (social, cultural, arts and entertainment uses).
- A strong economy that strengthens local businesses.
- Designing facilities to provide efficient service to the most people. This can be accomplished by combining smaller facilities into multipurpose facilities.

parks+recMH (Medicine Hat Parks and Recreation Master Plan)

Provides a vision for the future of parks and recreation in the city. This vision aligns with arts, heritage, and entertainment by stating that the City will: strive to celebrate our local history, heritage, diversity and local values through the way we play, celebrate and find relaxation in our public places. The plan also identifies actions that align with arts, heritage and entertainment including:

- Better promotion and use of streetscapes such as neighbourhood block events, downtown street festivals, programming events in the downtown
- Celebrate the local geographical features and ecology through a new trail interpretive program, focused on the landforms, flora and fauna of Medicine Hat
- Improved trail mapping needed (possibly done in conjunction with a trails master plan) along with a historic/ecological interpretive program.

Appendix D – Expanded Policy Analysis

Policy	Current State Summary	Potential Future Updates
<i>Heritage Resources Policy (2009)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the protection, retention, restoration, and awareness of tangible heritage resources. • Provides principles, goals, and an administrative structure. • Does not reference or make any commitments to community inclusion or representation. • Does not directly address First Nations and Métis heritage resources. • Does not provide direction for protection and awareness of intangible heritage resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update language/amend outdated terms to reflect contemporary context (e.g. references to Indigenous people and Nations) and align with the City's 'Statement of Acknowledgement, Recognition and Respect.' • Reference the importance of heritage diversity. • Incorporate intangible heritage resources into the policy. This can be done by expanding its focus to also include intangible resources. • Lay out provisions for the involvement of residents, First Nations and Métis communities in heritage management and identification of designated resources. • Update roles and responsibilities to remove references to groups who no longer exist and incorporate direction for involvement of a wider diversity of stakeholders. • Identify at a high level who should be part of the Heritage Resources Committee to help ensure that resources and activities are most representative of Medicine Hat's history.

Policy	Current State Summary	Potential Future Updates
<i>Public Art Policy (2005)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the benefits of public art to the city and community. • Guides acquisition and placement of public art on municipal property. • Establishes allocation of capital spending (1.25% and up to \$100K) on public art for '<i>community and cultural development, parks and outdoor recreation projects</i>.' • Defines parameters for funding, governance, selection, and management of public art and encourages collaboration between public agencies, the private sector and the arts community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance for public art on private property. • Update recognized benefits to reference artwork that reflects the diversity of people and communities in the city instead of a diversity of artwork only. • Expand scope of eligible capital projects. Consider including transit and road infrastructure. • Allow for placement of art in locations that will best serve the City's goals and access by the community. • Remove potential barriers to community and artist participation in the Public Art Committee. • Add direction to include representation from a diversity of artists and community members. • Add direction for the jury to reflect the diversity of the community and local artists. • Transfer detailed directions to an administrative policy (or procedure) and remove redundancies between Public Art Policy and Public Art Acquisition Policy.
<i>Public Art Acquisition Policy (2009)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to create a transparent process and standards for the acquisition of public art. • Identifies responsibilities for involved stakeholders and committees. • Provides detailed procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify parameters around identification of the 'theme' of a new artwork. • Include direction for acquisition to reflect multiplicity of diversity in the community. • Include direction for opportunities for citizen involvement and involvement of local artists.

Policy	Current State Summary	Potential Future Updates
<i>Archives, Art Gallery and Museum Mandate Policy (2015)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes the Cultural Development Department as the operator of the Esplanade Centre, and recognizes the mandate of the City's Archives, Art Gallery and Museum to protect the public trust of the material collections. Identifies high level responsibilities for related leadership roles including the Manager of Cultural Development, City Archivist, Art Gallery Director/Curator and Museum Curator. Provides parameters for staff in specialized roles to appraise gifts/donations, enter contracts, and maintain accreditation with professional associations. Is separate from the procedures related to the policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on municipal goals and high-level roles and responsibilities related to the archives, art gallery and museum, and transfer administrative details where possible to an administrative policy or procedure.
<i>Cultural Policy (2003)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief policy statement intended to recognize the value of culture and identify the roles of the municipality and community. Includes definitions and a statement about the City's belief in an inclusive definition of heritage in the region and 'ethnic diversity' but does not otherwise provide direction to action the policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline ways in which the City will support and grow arts and heritage. Outlines roles and responsibilities (current policy does not do this), including commitment to involve the residents, First Nations and Métis communities. Reference the importance of heritage diversity (contemporary context) and update language to reflect contemporary context, including reference to/inclusion of equity-deserving people/groups.

Appendix E – Expanded Comparative Benchmarking Analysis

This section identifies service level provisions for key arts, heritage, and entertainment facilities among comparator municipalities, as well as performance and impact measurement. This information was gathered from an online review and conversations with municipal staff. It should be noted that while the analysis primarily focuses on municipally owned facilities, some facilities that are not municipally owned, but that contribute to a community's core cultural infrastructure, have been included. This includes facilities such as performing arts centres in educational institutions, arts centres operated by non-profit associations, etc.

Figure 10. Population and Service Levels/Operational Models

Service Levels (Count), Owner/Operator Model						
Facility Category	Medicine Hat	Grande Prairie	St. Albert	Lethbridge	Comparator Average	Medicine Hat Service Level
Purpose Built Arts, Heritage and Entertainment Facilities*						
Public library (branch count)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	2 (muni/non-profit)	2 (muni/non-profit)	1.66	1
Local history museum (includes stand-alone and those in a multi-use facility)	1 (Medalta) (non-profit/non-profit)	1 (muni/muni)	2 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/muni)	1.33	2
	1 (Medicine Hat Museum (muni/muni)					
Archives (includes stand-alone and those in a multi-use facility)	1 (Medicine Hat Museum (muni/muni)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/muni)	1	1
Heritage interpretation facility (i.e. heritage village-type facility)	1 (Medalta) (non-profit/non-profit)	1 (muni/muni)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/muni)	1	1
Professional art gallery (includes permanent stand-alone galleries and those housed in a multi-use facility)	1 (TREX Space, muni/muni)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (institu/institu)	1.33	3
	1 (One on One @ MHC, institu/institu)			1 (muni/non-profit)		
	1 (Medicine Hat Art Gallery, muni/muni)					
Artist studio facility (facility primarily for artist studios/visual arts studios, stand-alone facility or studio within a multi-use facility, counts are facilities not number of studios)	1 (multipurpose space at MHC, institu/muni)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1.33	1
			1 (muni/mixed)			

*Does not include community centres/halls, recreation centres, private restaurants/bars/cinemas and other facilities that can accommodate events and arts activities but are not purpose built for them.

Service Levels (Count), Owner/Operator Model						
Facility Category	Medicine Hat	Grande Prairie	St. Albert	Lethbridge	Comparator Average	Medicine Hat Service Level
Performance space (purpose built theatres - individual theatres counted, even if in same overall facility)	1 @ 700 (in Esplanade, muni/muni) 1 @150 (in Esplanade, muni/muni) 1 @ 402 (Monarch Theatre) 1 @ 242 (MH High School Performing Arts Centre) 1 @ 152 (Public Library Theatre) 1 @ ~100 (MH musical theatre playhouse, non-profit/non-profit) 1 @ 310 (Crescent Heights High School Theatre, institu/institu) 1 @ 510 (Eresman (Medicine Hat College/ institutional)	1 @ 508 (institu/ institu) 2 @ 150 (institu/ institu) 2 @ 100 (institu/ institu) 1 @ 310 (institu/non-profit) 1 @ 160 (muni/non-profit)	1 @ 495 (muni/muni) 1 @ 140 (private/muni) 1 @ 227 (institu)	1 @ 201 (institu/ institu) 1 @ 474 (muni/muni) 1 @ 162 (muni/muni) 1 @ 200 (muni/non-profit) 1 @ 450 (institu/ institu) 1 @ 150 (institu/ institu)	5.33	8
Major Entertainment Venue (concert/ exposition centre including major arenas and other spaces that can be converted for concert, entertainment and event use)	1 @ 1500 (Medicine Hat Exhibitions and Stampede, non-profit/non-profit) 1 @ 7000 (Co-op) (muni/muni)	1 @ 1400 (muni/muni) 1 @ 4600 (muni/muni)	0	1 @ 6700 (muni/non-profit) 1 @ 7800 (muni/muni)	1.33	2
Major Recreation Centres (multi-purpose fitness and sports facilities that include at least 1 arena)	1 (Big Marble Go Centre) (muni/muni)	1 (muni/muni)	0	1 (muni/mixed)	0.66	1
Arts and Culture Hub (major facility featuring multiple uses devoted to arts and culture)	1 (Esplanade, muni/ muni) 1 (Medicine Hat Cultural Centre institu/ muni)	1 (muni/muni)	0	0 (1 being planned)	0.33	2
Cultural/Multicultural Centre (facility providing culture specific, intercultural or multicultural programming)	1 (Miywasin Friendship Centre non-profit/non-profit)	1 (non-profit/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit)	1 (muni/non-profit) (1 also being planned)	1	1

Performance and Impact Measurement in St. Albert

St. Albert produces an annual Cultural Services Report Card. Metrics recorded include participation/attendance, number of performances/events (opportunities for participation), stability of funding and participant feedback. More specifically the report includes:⁶⁵

- Attendance numbers and event numbers, ticket sales numbers, participation numbers
- Narrative reporting on events for/by diverse cultural communities
- Volunteer numbers and associated dollar value
- Major funding sources for municipal facilities
- Cost recovery at municipal facilities
- Patron feedback on arts and cultural activities
 - e.g. contribution to mental health and wellbeing, role in connecting with others in community, feelings of being welcome/belonging at City hosted live entertainment

The Arts and Heritage Foundation of St. Albert (which operates the museum and art gallery under a partnership agreement with the City) also produce an annual report, which includes similar metrics, along with others such as the contribution of fine arts sales to local artists, the number of artifacts accessioned, archival usage, social media followers and website visits.⁶⁶

Performance and Impact Measurement in Grande Prairie

The City of Grande Prairie measures citizen satisfaction with 'arts, cultural facilities and programs' (among other municipal services) through its bi-annual Citizen Satisfaction Surveys. It produces a report that includes current levels of satisfaction as well as changes from previous results.⁶⁷ The City's newly adopted (January 2024) Recreation and Culture Strategy provides the basis for future evaluation by identifying potential metrics related to the strategy's goals/actions, along with a commitment for them to be refined and operationalized as part of plan implementation. Example metrics include:

- Increased availability of / interest in arts/cultural programs.
- Number of programs provided or introduced.
- Increased Arts/Culture Interest.
- Increased availability of art space in Grande Prairie.

Arts and culture tenants in City-owned buildings report annually to City Council using their own metrics.

Performance and Impact Measurement in Lethbridge

The City of Lethbridge also reports bi-annually on citizen satisfaction. Their survey includes high level questions about the delivery, importance and usage of various municipal services and programs such as arts and culture facilities.⁶⁸ There are no other formal processes or requirements for Administration to use to measure performance and impact. The City's 2021 Recreation and Culture Master Plan identified numerous potential metrics associated with the plan's desired outcomes. Examples include: number of participants in programs related to culture and the arts, number of users of publicly funded culture facilities, indicators of perceived mental health for general public, arts and culture facility provision per capita, number of people accessing the Fee Assistance Program to participate in arts and culture activities, and number of events supported by the City that entail creativity.⁶⁹ The City's draft Civic Cultural Plan will also provide direction for monitoring and evaluation. Partner organizations present financial reports to City Council each year and include commentary on high level alignment with the Recreation and Culture Master Plan. The City of Lethbridge also produces annual report on finances and includes event revenues from ENMAX centre.⁷⁰

Appendix F – Expanded Trends Analysis

Rising costs and inflation are key challenges for the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector.

Consumer spending is suppressed across economic sectors. In a recent study 52.5% of arts, entertainment and recreation businesses indicated that rising inflation is a top obstacle for them.⁷¹ Participants in arts and culture are hesitant to spend on activities because of affordability challenges overall.⁷² Culture-goers are looking for more affordable and accessible events, at a time when 22.5 % of arts, entertainment and recreation businesses anticipate obstacles related to rising costs in real estate, leasing and property taxes.⁷³

People are looking for experiences, not just events.

Expectations are growing among culture-goers. They are increasingly looking for experiences, not just events, and are more willing to invest in memorable experiences that they feel are guaranteed to entertain them.^{74,75} Experiences go beyond the core offerings of an event, and include communications, sales process, service elements, activities such as dining and transportation before and after.⁷⁶ There is a need for collaboration in the arts, heritage and entertainment sector to facilitate 'experience first' offerings.⁷⁷

Participation and employment numbers in the arts, heritage and entertainment sector have rebounded post-covid.

According to the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts, participant and employee numbers in the sector have generally rebounded to near pre-COVID levels. They note that "this suggests that the recovery phase is essentially completed and that whatever distance remains compared to pre-COVID levels should be considered the new post-COVID reality."⁷⁸ Additional efforts will be required to grow participation beyond this 'new normal'.

Participation in and support for arts and culture remains generally strong in Alberta.

According to a Government of Alberta survey, 70.3% of Albertans attended arts and culture activities in 2022-2023, and 54% participated in arts activities. More specifically, 61.7% attended a live performance, including music (45.1%), theatre (35.2%), and dance (14.1%). 34.9% attended a visual arts event, including visiting studios and art galleries (25.8%), and 33% attended an arts and culture festival. 55.7% also visited a heritage facility in the province.⁷⁹

Creative hubs and multi-tenant facilities are becoming important cultural amenities.

In communities across Canada creative hubs are emerging as essential cultural centers.⁸⁰ These multi-tenant facilities serve as focal points, uniting professionals from diverse arts and heritage pursuits, along with various creative disciplines. They offer shared space, equipment, and amenities, fostering collaboration and idea exchange among users. They also provide opportunities for professional development while offering accessible space and programming to the public.⁸¹

There is a rise in multipurpose venues and facilities.

Multipurpose venues and facilities are becoming more and more prevalent. These facilities allow services to be consolidated, providing opportunities for the effective use of resources and economies of scale, resulting in increased efficiencies. They also support the development of community and entertainment hubs that accommodate a variety of activities and users.⁸² Venues that attract diverse customers and maximize the number of event dates can serve as anchors, helping to complement and sustain surrounding retail, entertainment, hotel and office spaces.⁸³

Culture is increasingly recognized as a key economic driver and core element of placemaking and community building.

In 2018, Alberta boasted 54,439 culture-related jobs and 87.3% of Albertan adults agreed that cultural activities in their communities enhanced their quality of life.⁸⁴ Despite today's affordability challenges Albertans are still spending on culture. A study in 2023 found that on average adults are spending \$2,800 per year on experiences. This translates to significant economic activity across the province.⁸⁵ Governments at various levels have recognized the significance of creative industries to the economy, as well as community development and revitalization, and have implemented policies and programs to support the sector. Many have also recognized the importance of strategic heritage interpretation and storytelling to local placemaking and cultural development.

There is a growing understanding of the potential for the arts to boost social connectedness and combat loneliness.

Loneliness is recognized globally as a public health and social problem associated with early death and reduced physical and mental health. It is also linked with the concept of lack of social connections and social isolation. It is estimated that 25% of older adults experience social isolation and up to 15% of adolescents experience loneliness. Those over 65 and under 25 are said to be particularly at risk for poor health outcomes.⁸⁶ The arts have emerged as 'an area of practice with potential for fostering social connectedness', and thus combating loneliness, through both participatory and non-interactive activities.⁸⁷ Arts activities are perceived by participants to facilitate social opportunities, opportunities for shared experiences, feelings of similarity and belonging, and opportunities to learn from and about other people.⁸⁸

There is a need for more inclusion in arts planning, programming, and facilities.

Municipalities and arts organizations are being called on to better support and reflect the diversity of their communities in their cultural programming and planning activities. The arts sector has for many years been recognized as lacking in equity, and the need for a more equitable ecosystem was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.^{89,90} It is more common for goals and visions in community cultural plans to incorporate or otherwise focus on inclusion to help ensure progress in this area. Considerations include both increasing access to culture and ensuring that programming and planning reflects and welcomes the diversity of a community. A 2021 federal survey found that an important minority (31% of Canadians) indicate they feel like they do not belong at cultural facilities in their communities. Among those who most felt like they did not belong were Indigenous people, Immigrants, Asian, Black and other racialized people, and those who are Deaf or persons with disabilities.⁹¹



Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Appendix G – Expanded Engagement Results

Online Survey Results

A survey collected input from residents, businesses/organization, and government from January 15th to July 11th, 2024. In total, 520 responses were received. 93% of respondents indicated they reside in the City of Medicine Hat, 2% of respondents were businesses/organizations, 1% of respondents were from government, 1% of respondents were non-governmental organizations and 4% were other.

Residents

The online survey streamed respondents to different questions based on if they identified themselves as a resident or a representative of a business/government/organization. The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents who identified themselves as a resident. Of the responses received, 63% of respondents identified as female, 32% identified as male, 3% preferred not to say, and 2% identified as other. Respondents were primarily between the ages of 60-69 (28%), 40-49 (22%), 50-59 (16%), and 30-39 (15%).

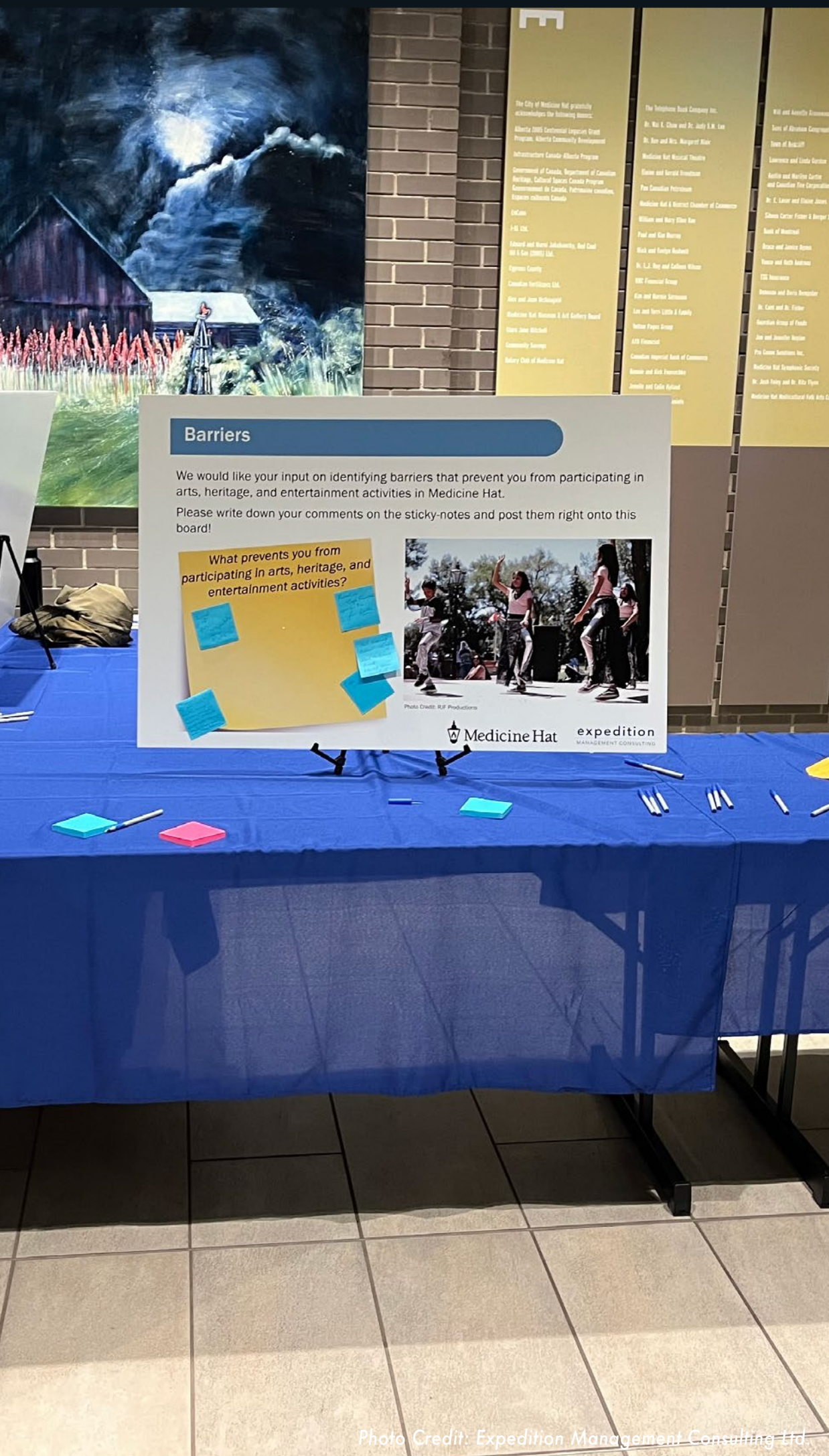


Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.



In a few words, please describe what arts, heritage, and entertainment means to you.

Respondents identified the following most often:

Arts:

- Performing arts activities including theatre, music, dance, and live performances.
- Visual arts activities include photography, painting, sculptures, and visual entertainment.
- Art is a way to express yourself (i.e., artistic expression, creative expression, etc.).
- Arts is important for the community, and it brings people together.
- Expressions of culture.
- Art is important for people's quality of life.
- Art refers to venues such as galleries, theatres, and public spaces to view art.

Heritage:

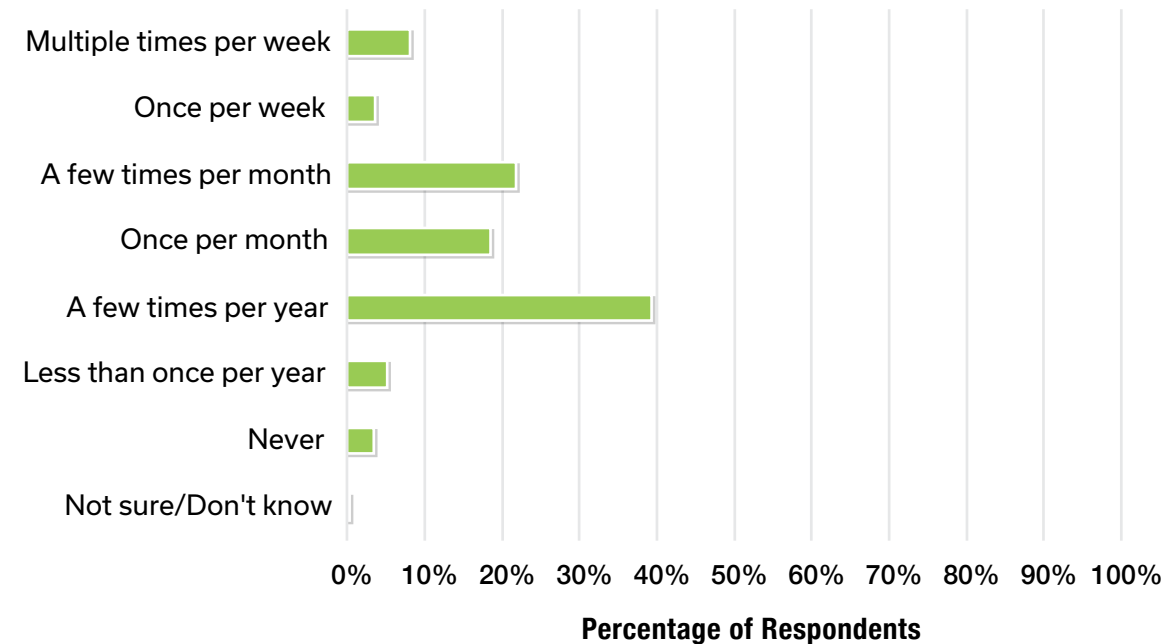
- Refers to history, understanding the past, and celebrating the community's history.
- Preserving historic buildings and history.
- Venues including museums, libraries, and archives.
- Cultural history.
- Provides opportunities for education.
- Provides a sense of community.

Entertainment:

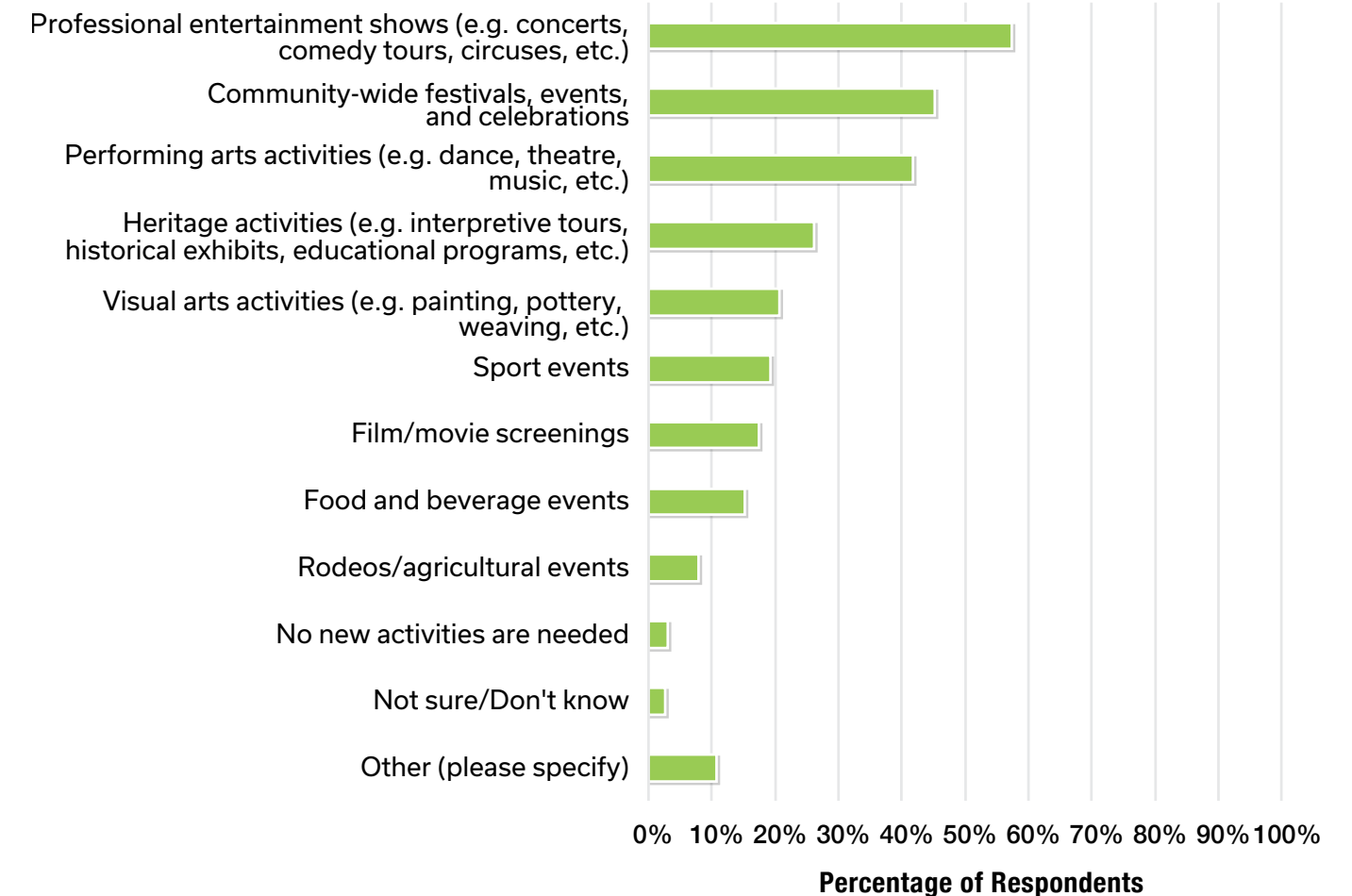
- Variety of performances including concerts, theatres, comedy shows, sports, movies, festivals, etc.
- Entertainment is about enjoyment and providing opportunities to experience fun.
- Provides a sense of community through socialization, interaction, and shared experiences.
- Entertainment is important to people's quality of life.



Please indicate how frequently you participate in arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat.



What, if any, new arts, heritage, and entertainment activities are most needed in Medicine Hat. Please select up to three options.





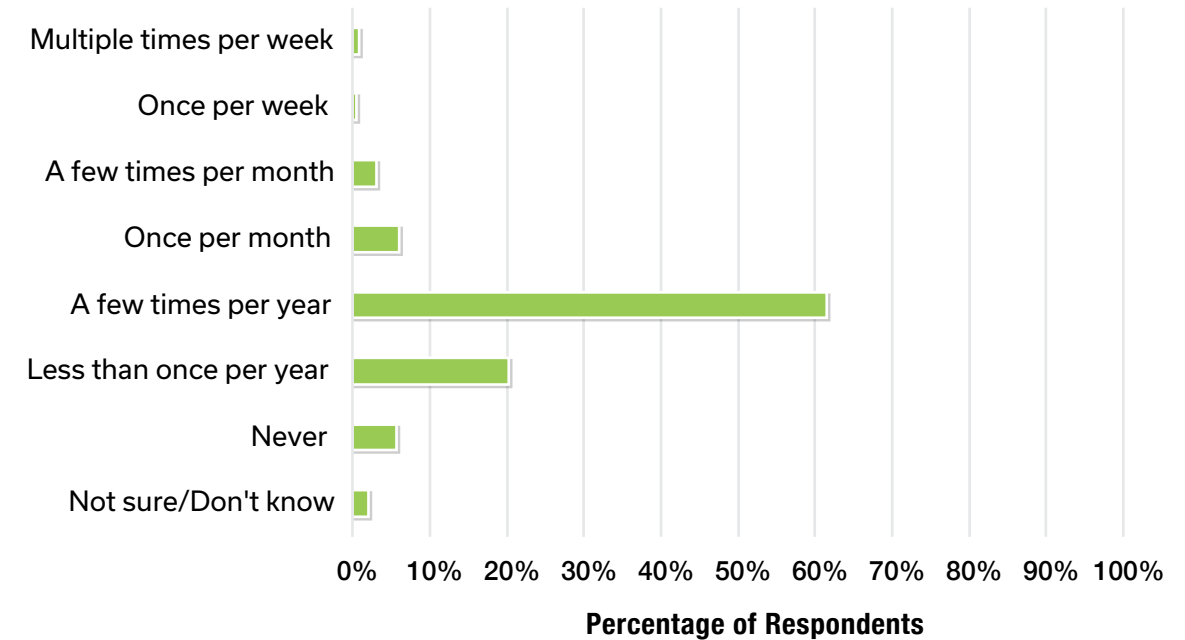
Do you have any specific ideas for arts, heritage, or entertainment activities that you would like to see offered in Medicine Hat? If so, please identify them below.

Respondents identified the following most often:

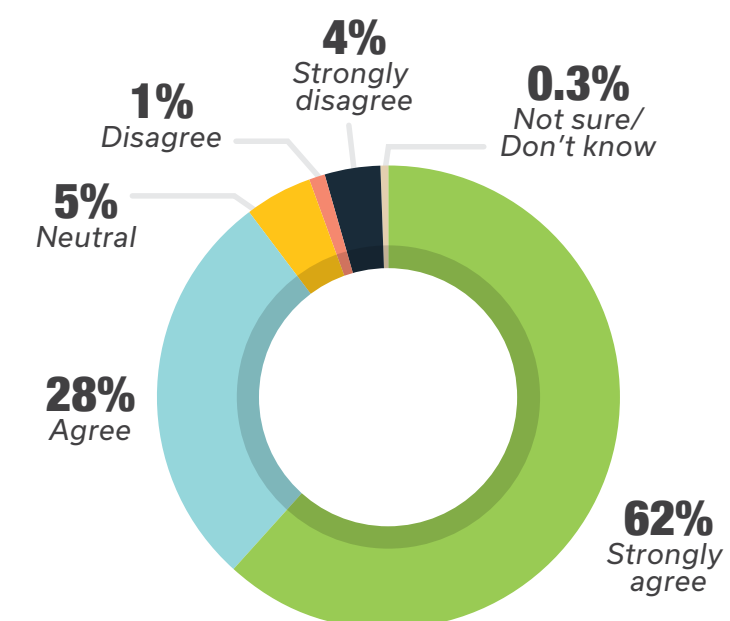
- More variety of music concerts, outdoor concerts, and more big-name performers.
- More festivals and events including cultural events, food/beverage events and outdoor festivals.
- More performing arts opportunities including live theatre, musical theatre, ballet/dance, and plays.
- Attracting more sporting events including Memorial Cup, Scotties, Brier, and other tournaments.
- More heritage activities including exhibits and tours.
- Need for more low-cost activities or free events.
- Need for showcasing and supporting local talent.
- More entertainment shows including circus shows, comedy shows, and other stage shows.



On average, how often do you travel outside Medicine Hat to access art, heritage, and entertainment activities?

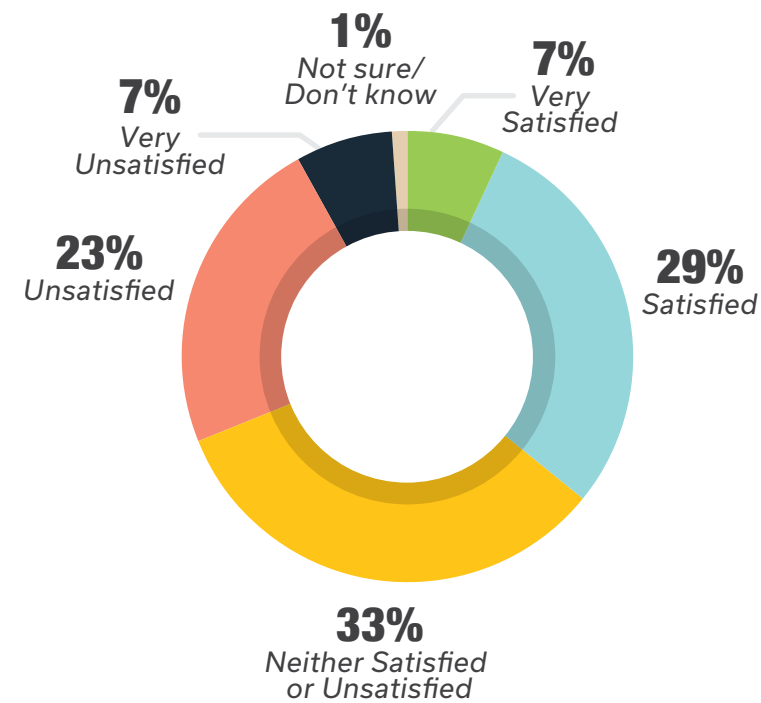


Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: Arts, heritage, and entertainment activities are important to quality of life in Medicine Hat.

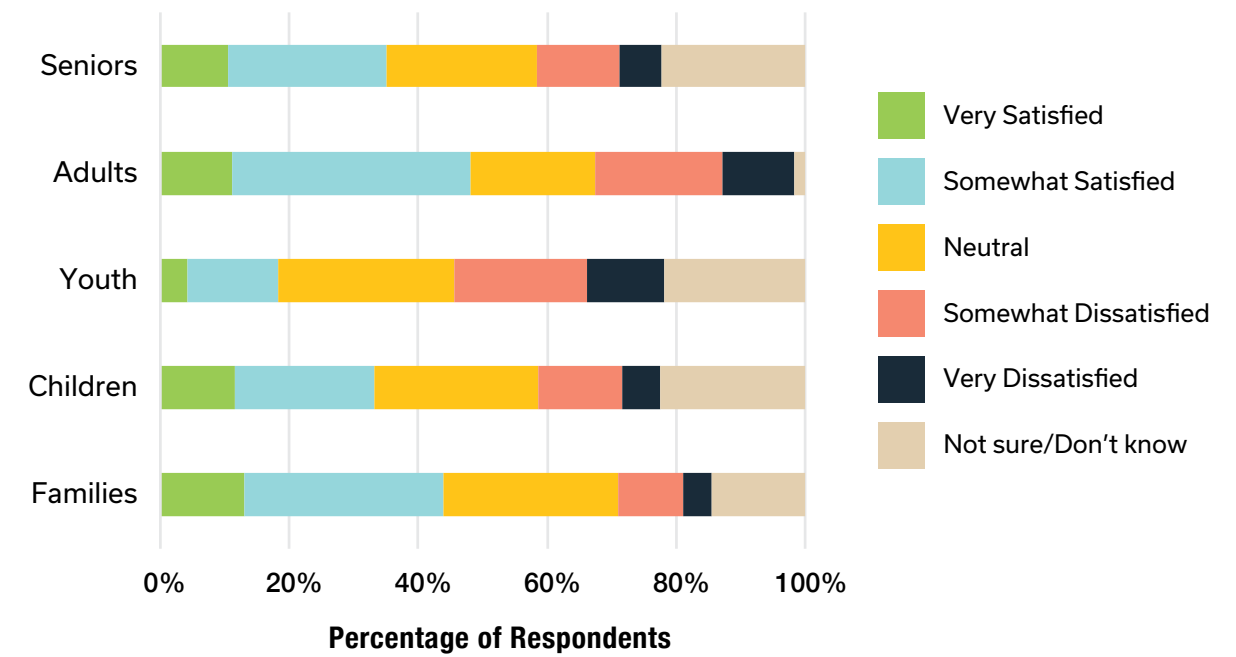




Please rate your overall level of satisfaction with arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat.

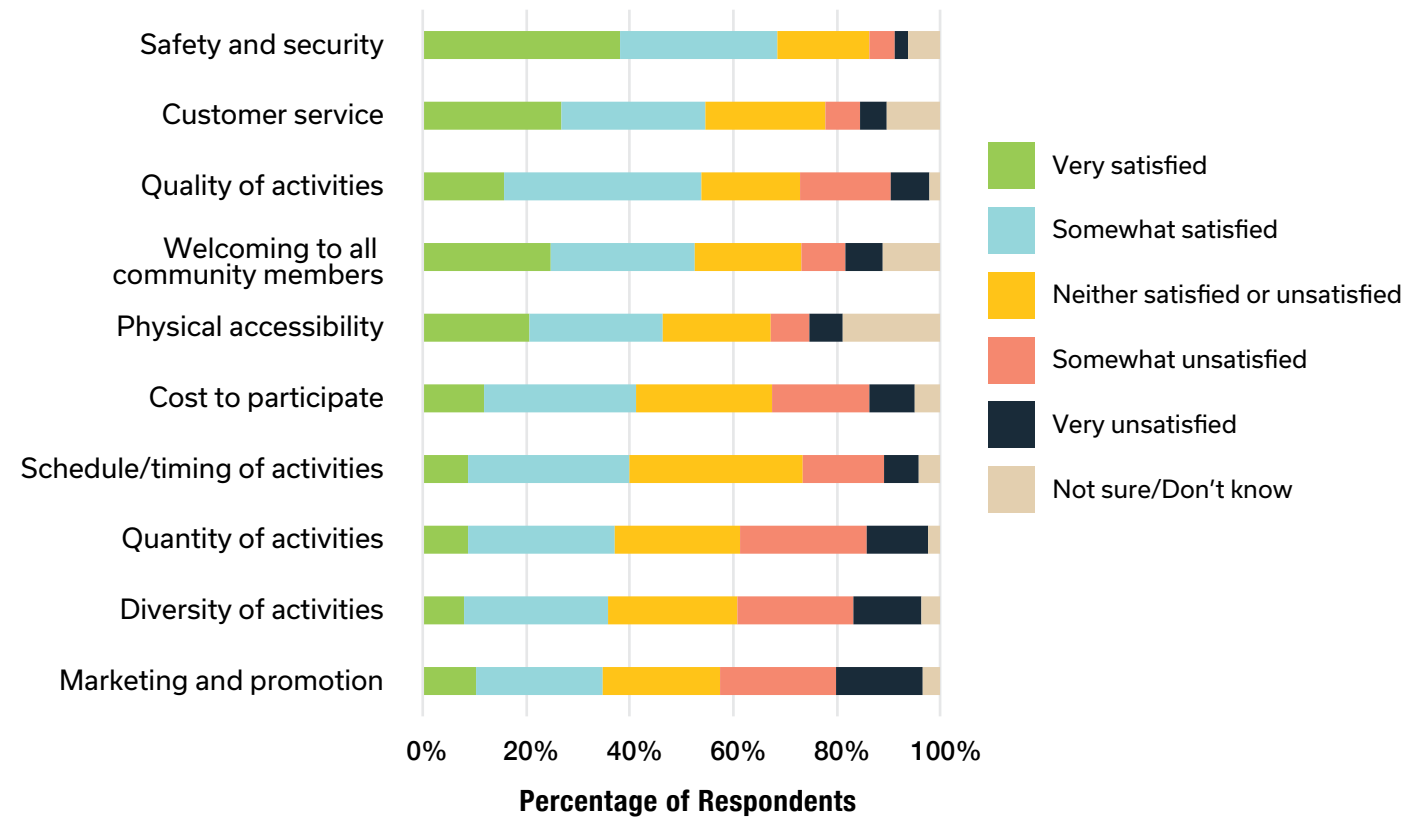


How satisfied are you with arts, heritage, and entertainment activities for the following age categories in Medicine Hat?





Please rate the following aspects of arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat.



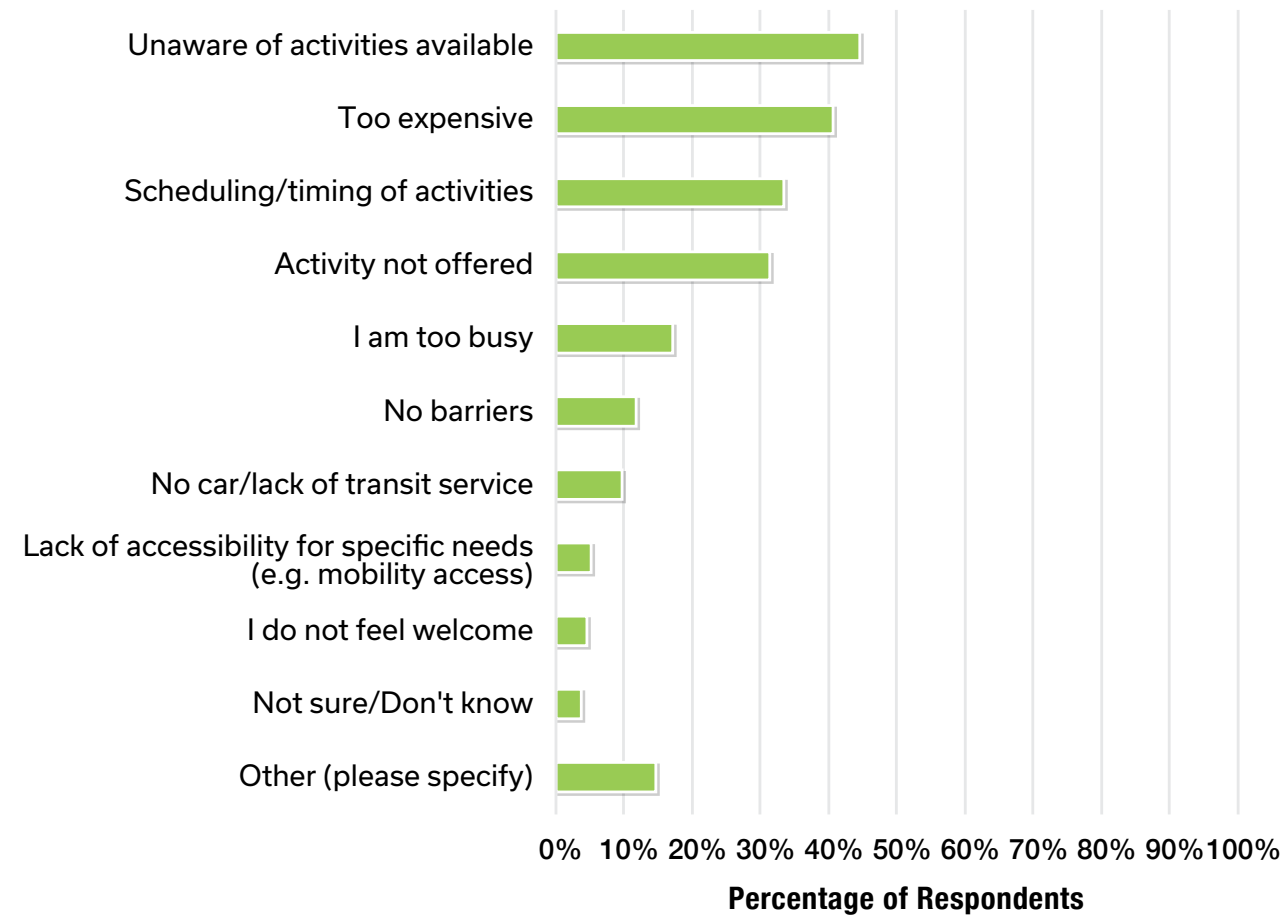
If one improvement could be made to arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat, what would your top priority be?

Respondents indicated the following most often:

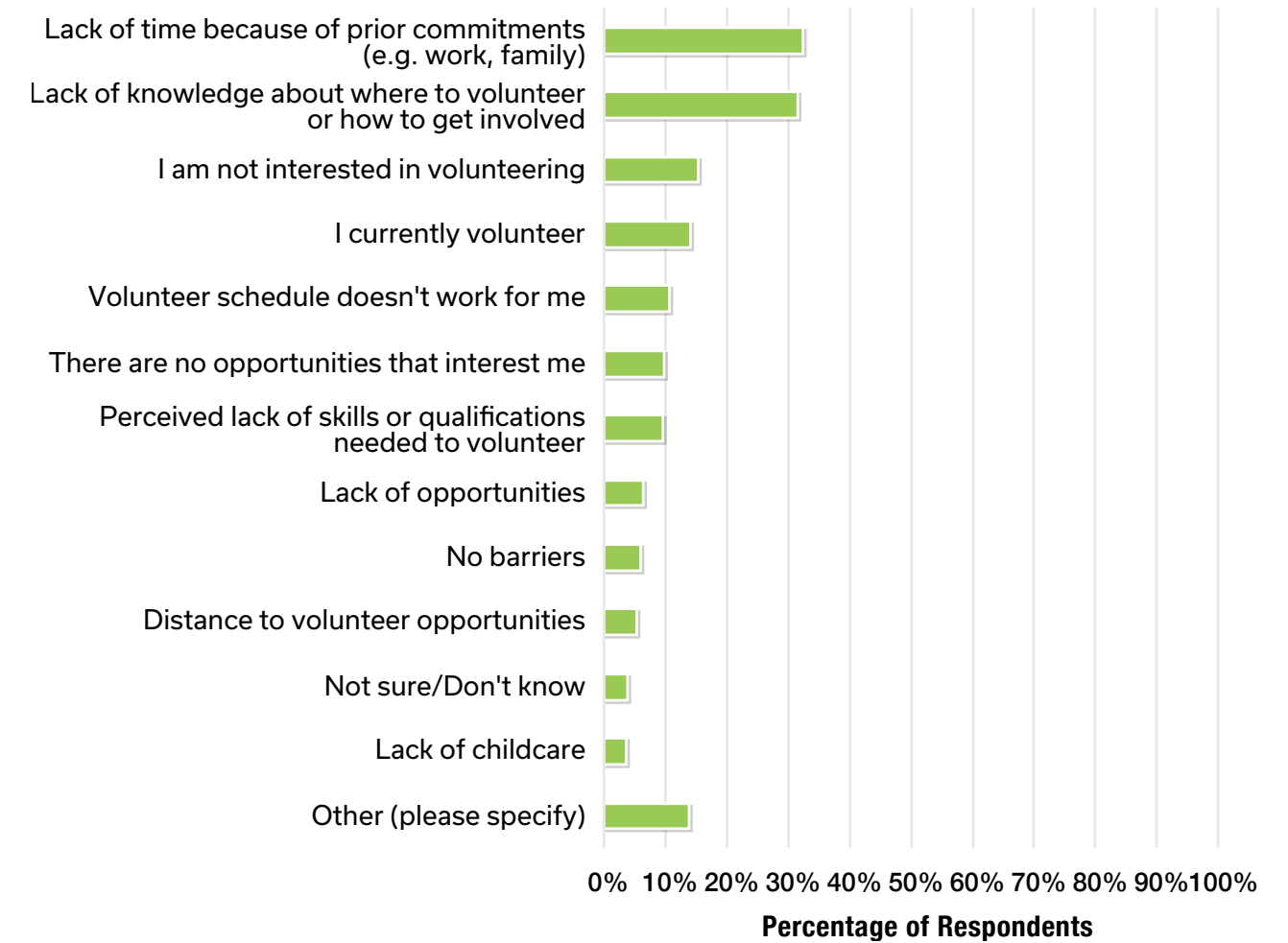
- Need for more low cost and free activities and more low-cost rental options for groups.
- Enhancing the quality of activities including higher quality entertainers, concerts, and big-name acts.
- Enhancing the quantity of activities including more concerts, sporting events, theatre, and overall entertainment options.
- Improving marketing and promotions of activities. Opportunities included having a central platform for advertisements and enhancing communication of upcoming events.
- Need for more activities that are available for families and more entertainment that cater to youth and young adults.
- Need for more variety and diversity in the types of events and concerts offered.
- Utilizing outdoor space and better use of existing venues.
- Addressing transportation challenges to Co-op Place and parking issues at Esplanade.



What, if anything, prevents you from participating in arts, heritage, and entertainment activities more often? Please select all that apply.

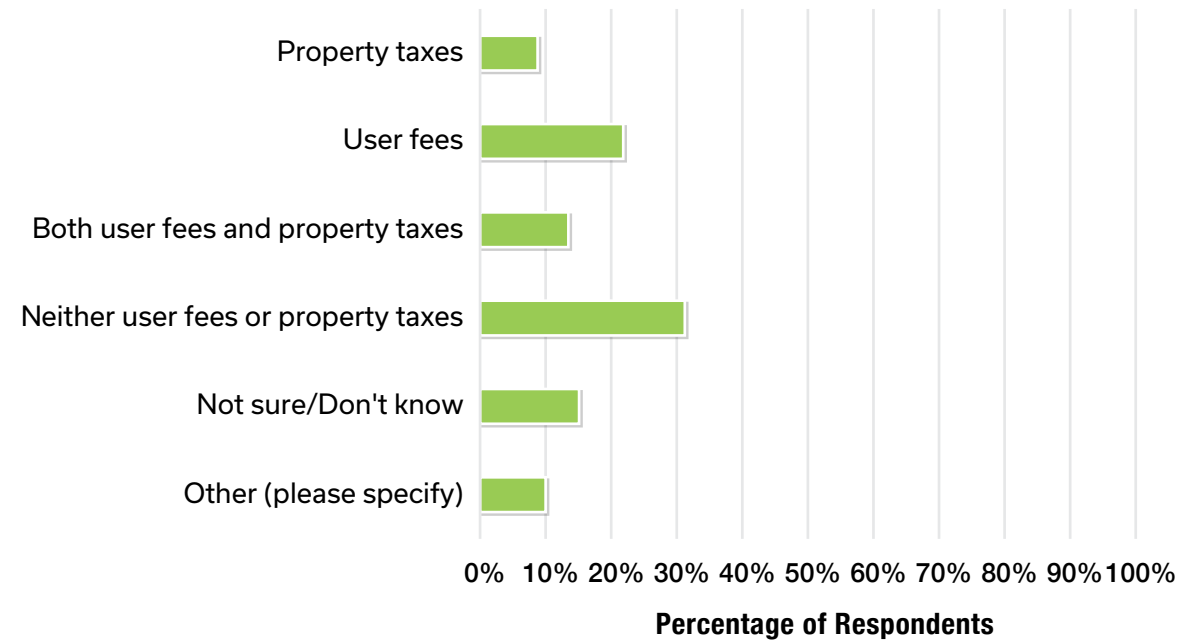


What, if anything, prevents you from volunteering in an arts, heritage, or entertainment capacity in Medicine Hat? Please select all that apply.

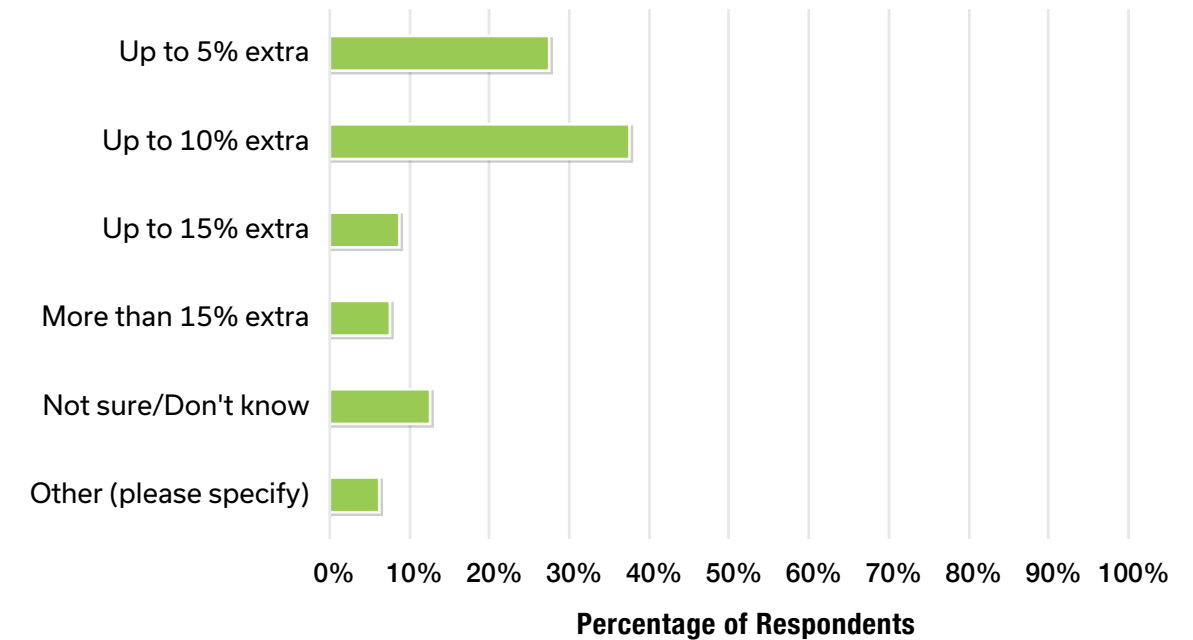




To better meet the community's needs for arts, heritage, and entertainment, would you be willing to support increases to:



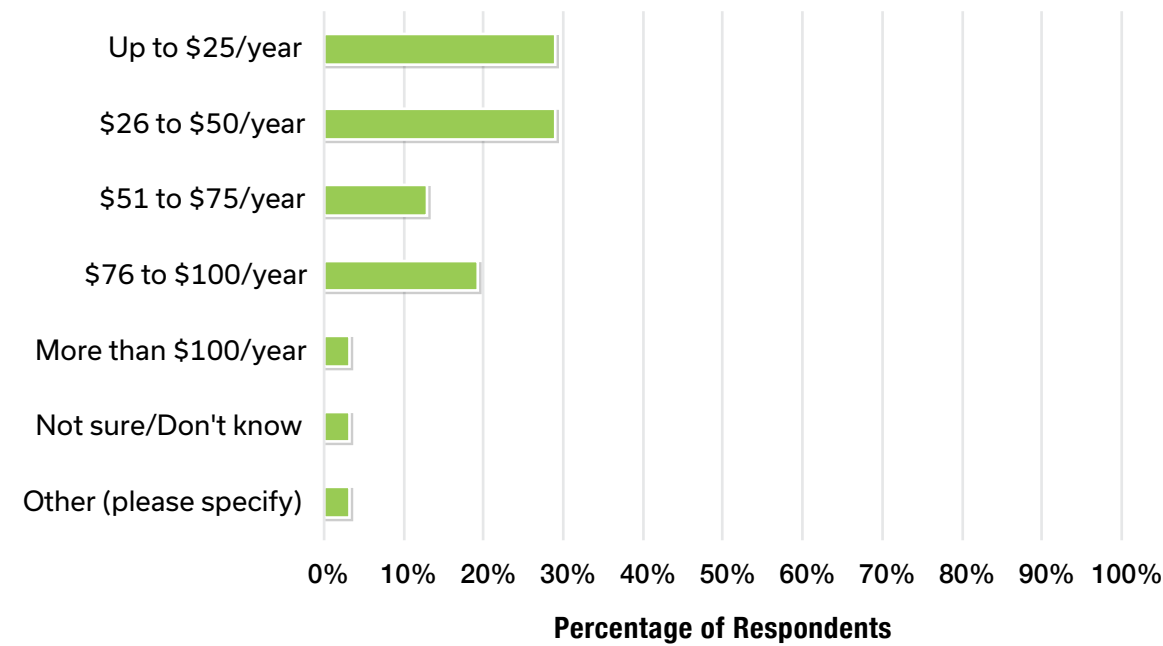
If user fees were to increase to better meet arts, heritage, and entertainment needs in Medicine Hat, how much of an increase would you support?



The next question was directed at respondents who would be willing to support increases to property taxes.



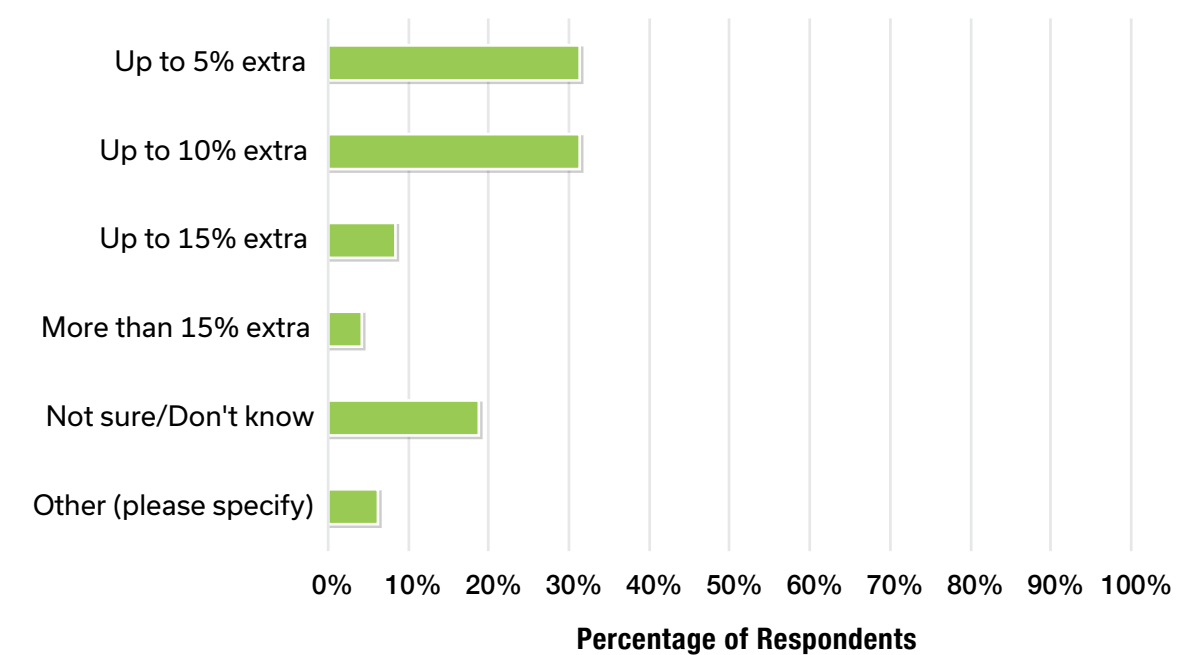
If property taxes were to increase to better meet arts, heritage, and entertainment needs in Medicine Hat, how much of an increase would you support?



The next two questions were directed at respondents who would be willing to support increases to user fees and property taxes.



If user fees were to increase to better meet arts, heritage, and entertainment needs in Medicine Hat, how much of an increase would you support?





If property taxes were to increase to better meet arts, heritage, and entertainment needs in Medicine Hat, how much of an increase would you support?

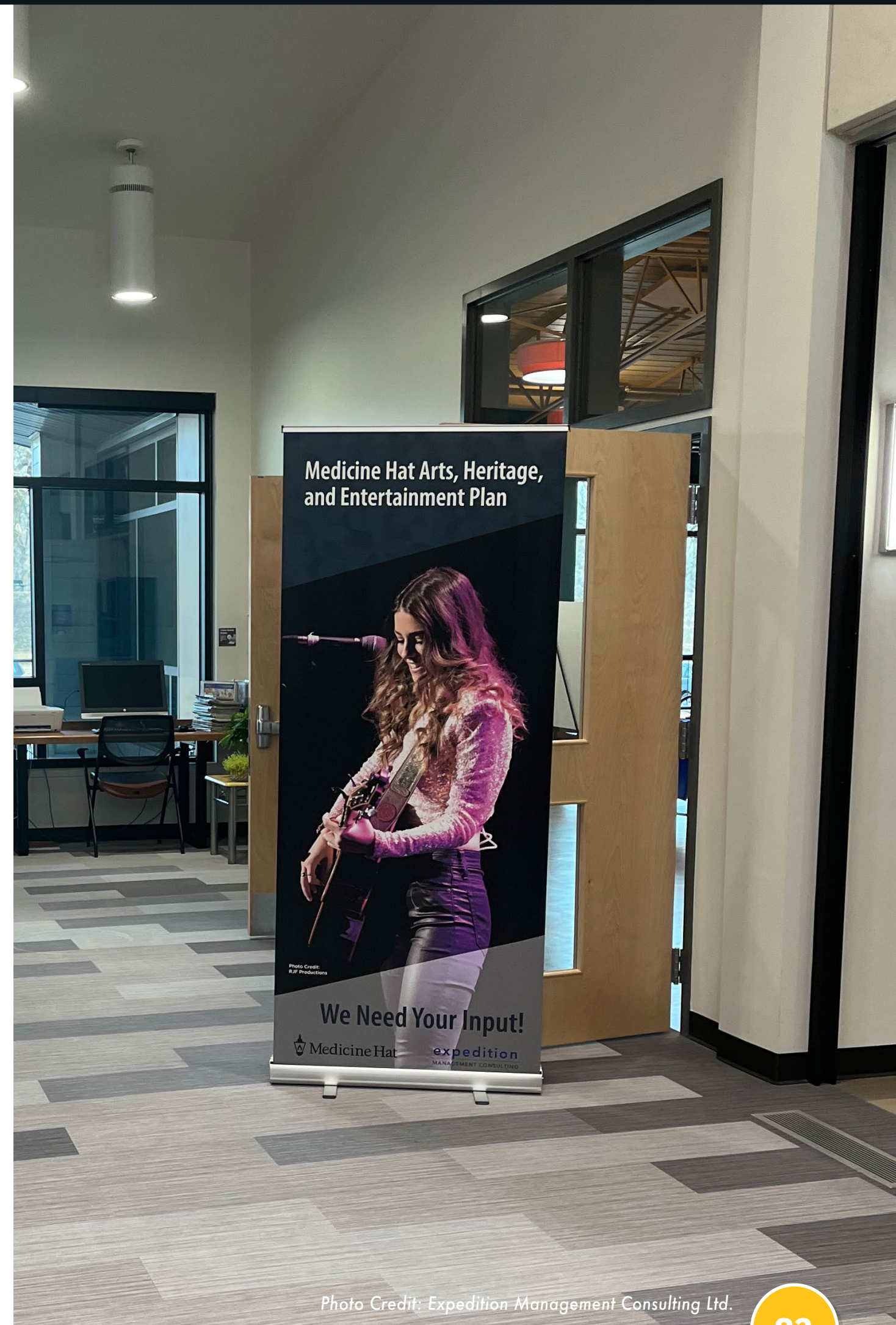
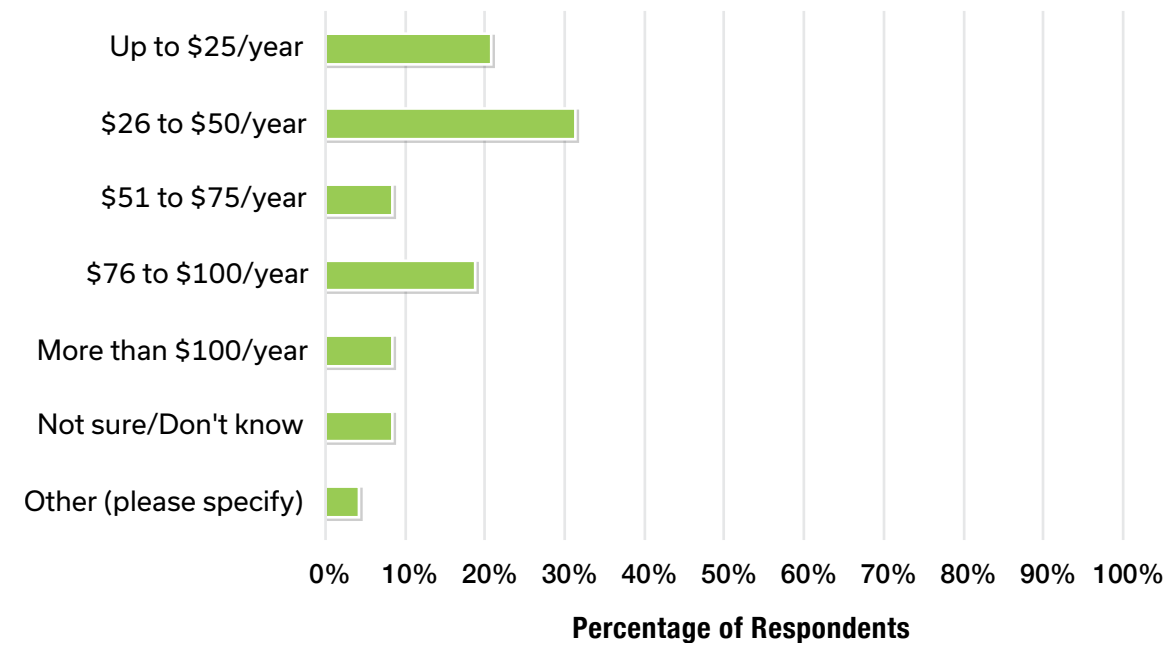


Photo Credit: Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

Businesses/Organizations/Government

The following information is applicable specifically to survey respondents who identified themselves as a representative of a business/organization/government.



In a few words, please describe what arts, heritage, and entertainment means to your organization.



Please rate your organization's level of agreement with the following statement: Arts, heritage, and entertainment activities are important to quality of life in Medicine Hat.

Respondents identified the following most often:

Arts

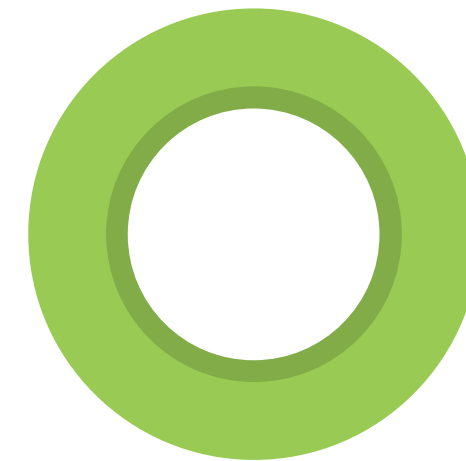
- Freedom of creative expression.
- Promoting local artists through photography.
- Creativity of an individual or group.
- Engagement with others and the community.
- Celebration of the diverse community.
- Future jobs.

Heritage

- Learning and celebrating history.
- Connecting people to history.
- Understanding the past and history is important.
- Honoring the heritage of Medicine Hat by utilizing existing venues.
- Photography.
- Expression.

Entertainment

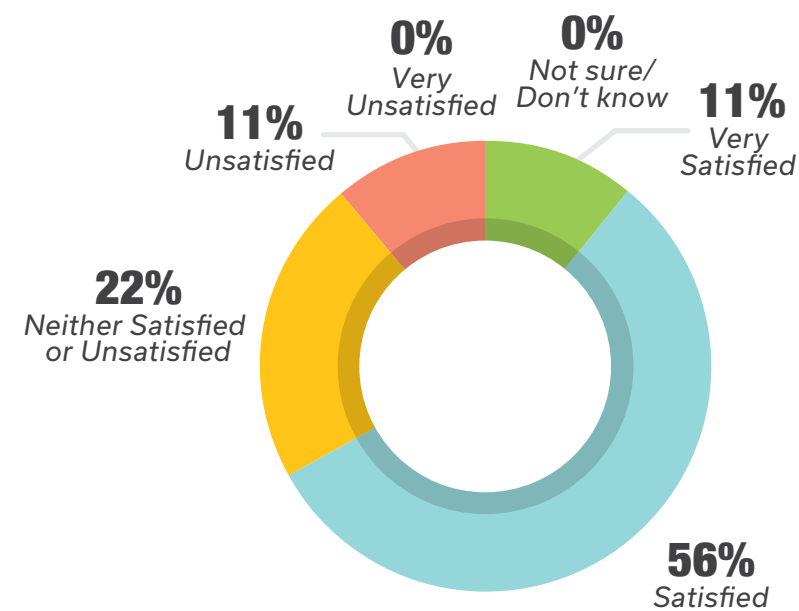
- Opportunity to engage with the community through various events.
- Enhancing quality of life.
- Offering and promoting events.
- Enjoyment.
- Connecting with other artists and talent.



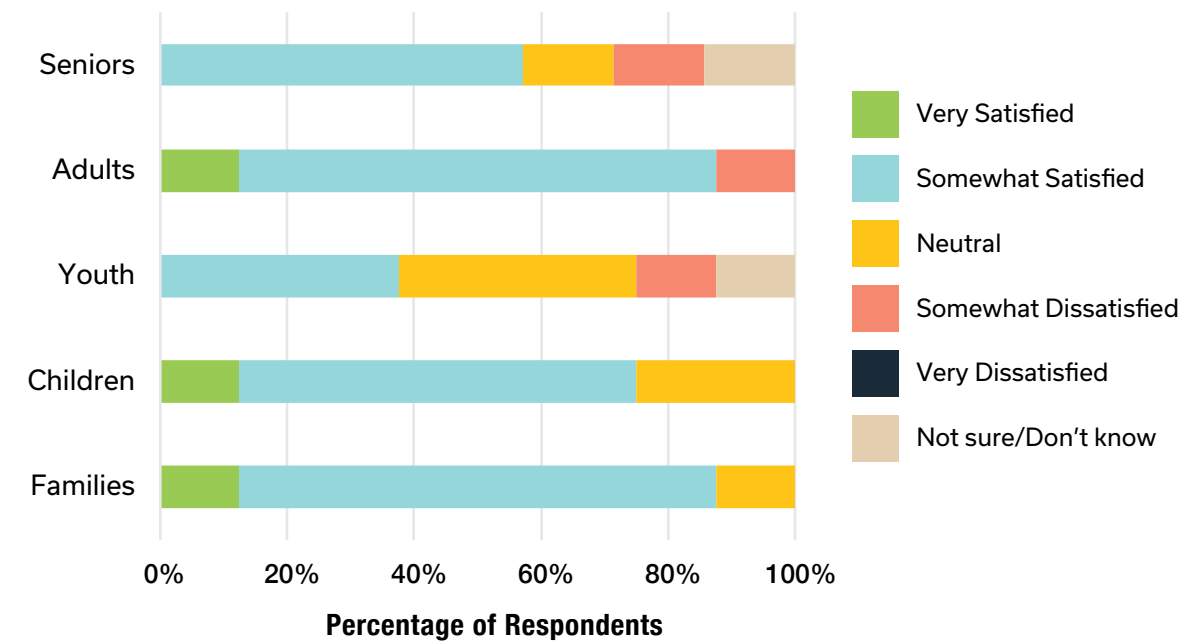
100%
Strongly agree



Please rate your organization's overall level of satisfaction with arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat.

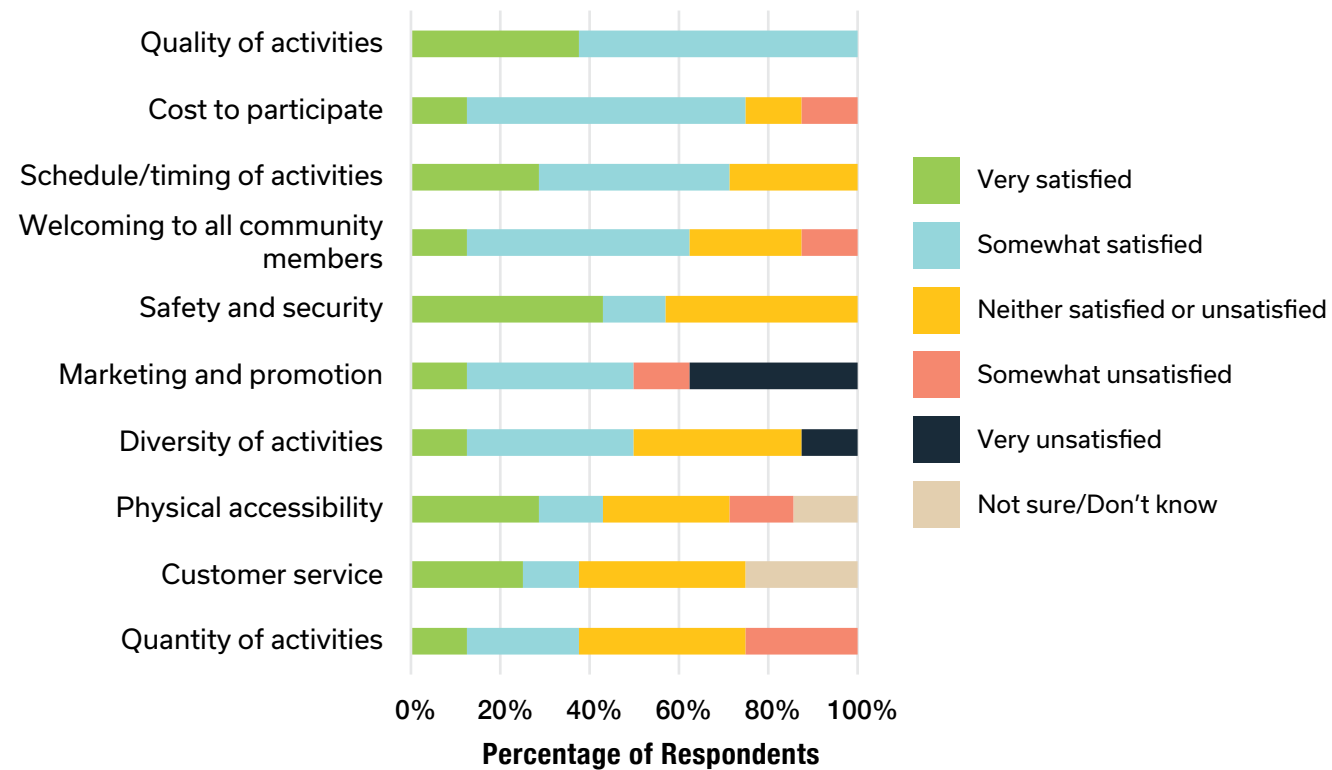


How satisfied is your organization with arts, heritage, and entertainment activities for the following age categories in Medicine Hat?





Please rate the following aspects of arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat.



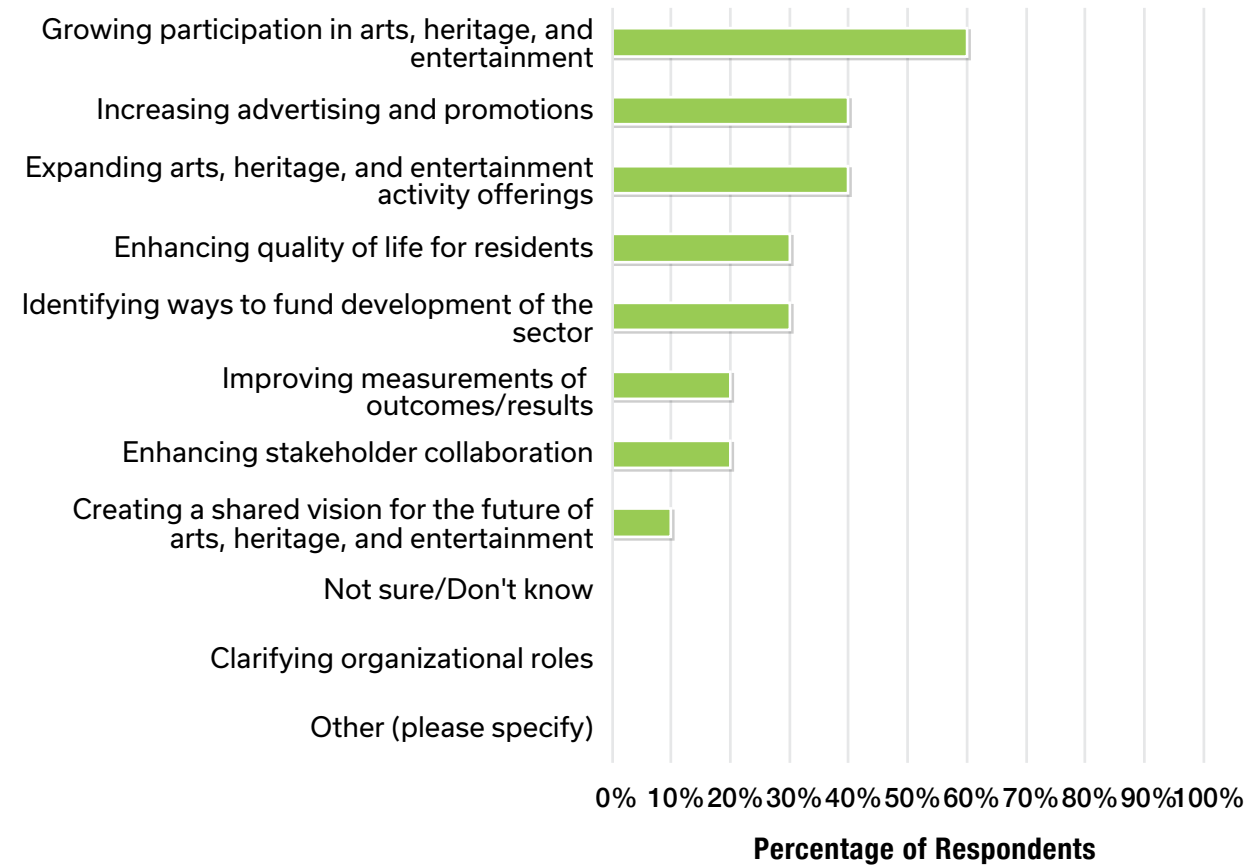
What opportunities are there to grow and/or improve the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector in Medicine Hat?

Respondents identified the following most often:

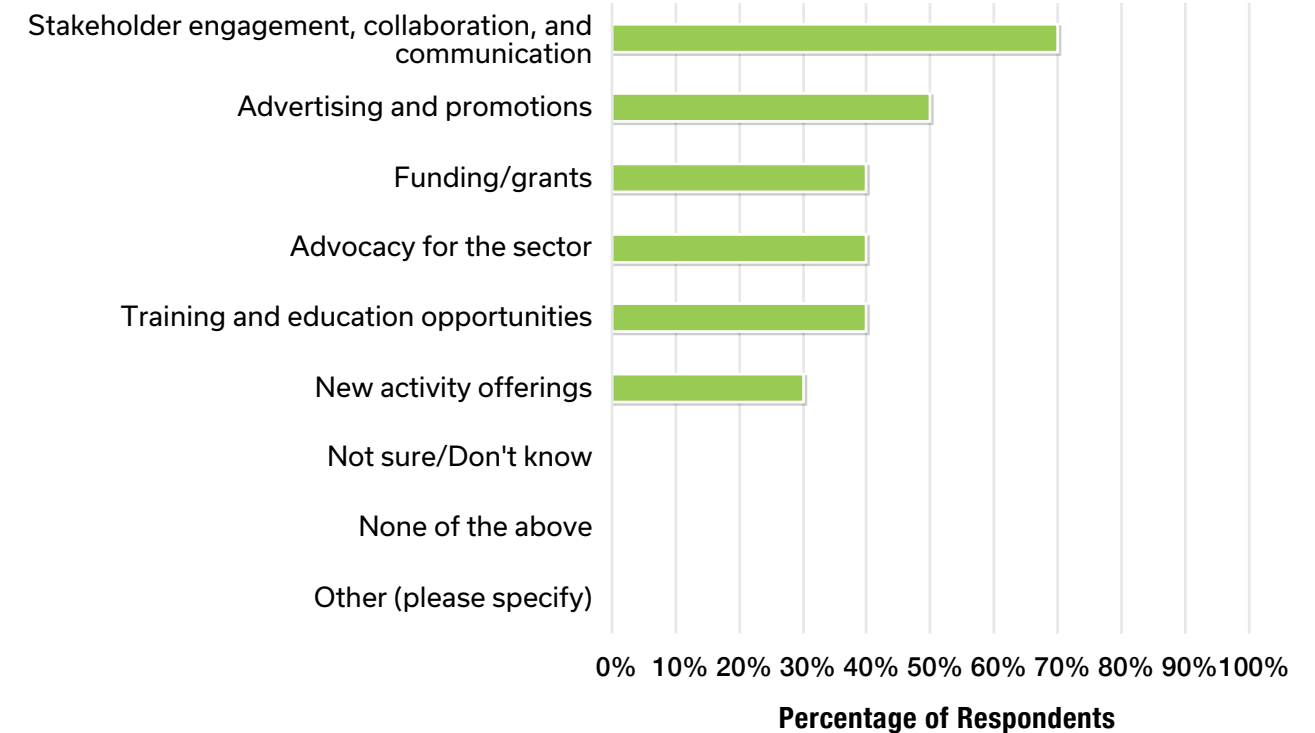
- Opportunity to develop relationships with local organizations to coordinate events.
- Mobile art workshops.
- Studios that offer workspace.
- Collaboration with the City of Medicine Hat.
- Support local businesses through marketing and promotion.
- Offer venues at an affordable rental rate for local artists.
- More heritage improvements.



As we begin developing the Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Plan for Medicine Hat, what does your organization think the top 3 issues we should focus on to help you develop and deliver activities? Please select up to three options.



What types of services would most help your organization to develop and deliver arts, heritage, and entertainment activities in Medicine Hat? Please select up to 3 options.



What can your organization do to help develop the arts, heritage, and entertainment sector in Medicine Hat?

Respondents identified the following most often:

- Support with promoting activities.
- Connect stakeholders in the community.
- Offering music that caters to the younger demographic.
- More opportunities for open calls for photographers in the community to help promote.
- Providing audio technical support.
- Facilitating functions of events.
- Participating in an organizing committee.

Digital Input Workshops

Two Digital Input Workshops were hosted on February 1st and February 6th, 2024. 9 participants from the community participated in the sessions. The following summarizes the input received.

Activity Needs	Barriers	One Thing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signage for historical sites.• More heritage educational programs.• Need for more engagement with youth.• More activities for young adults (20-30).• Need for more contemporary artists and events.• Opportunity to utilize technology such as multisensory exhibits.• Need for updated exhibits at the Esplanade Museum.• Ensuring we are celebrating Indigenous history.• More cultural activities.• More performing arts activities for the younger generation.• More concerts, theatre shows, and dance shows.• Tourism opportunities (packages).• More collaboration between organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation challenges (e.g., parking at Co-op Centre).• Lack of venues for local artists to promote their art.• Timing of activities (e.g., need for more activities/events during the day).• Competition of existing events (e.g., some are offered on the same day/time).• Cost of activities at events.• Accessibility in venues (e.g., Esplanade).• Lack of marketing and promotions of activities (e.g., there is too much reliance on social media).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More big-name entertainment acts.• Promoting the city's culture.• Opportunity to make Medicine Hat a destination.• Need for an Allied Arts Council.• Improving signage of historic resources.• Enhancing marketing and promotions (e.g., centralized place for all events).• Enhanced communication of events.• Need for more classical music concerts.• More social opportunities/events for local artists.

Community Road Shows

Members of the consulting team visited Medicine Hat from January 29th to 30th, 2024 to conduct community road shows. Additionally, City staff collected input on February 13th and May 15th. Staffed engagement stations were set up at multiple locations to collect input from community members regarding their arts, heritage, and entertainment needs. The stations had table-top presentation boards where participants could “stick” their input onto the boards. In total, the consultant team and City staff engaged with 152 community members. The following summarizes the input received.

Satisfaction	Activity Needs	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of satisfaction with current offerings (e.g., activities at the Esplanade and planning of events). • Satisfaction with heritage walking tours, family-friendly events and events that are hosted downtown. • Unsatisfied with the lack of outdoor festivals, cultural festivals, and classical music concerts. • Satisfied with the organization of events (e.g., Jazz fest, art gallery, Stampede, musical theatre). • Appreciation for the fair entry program. • Dissatisfied with costs of some experiences. • General satisfaction with current activities. • Great job being done for the size of the community. • Silent disco at the Esplanade is great. • The sound in the Esplanade is awesome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More concerts that showcase local talent. • More opportunities for new and upcoming bands. • Increased variety in concerts (e.g., rock bands, electronic music, military band concerts etc.). • More performing arts performances such as theatre, ballet, and Broadway. • More entertainment shows such as comedy. • More sporting events. • More outdoor and free events. • LGBTQ events. • Indigenous dances, powwows and jigging activities. • Need for engagement with smaller organizations and nonprofits. • More festivals (e.g., arts, music, Folk Fest, and Rib Fest). • More spring/summer activities for youth. • More winter activities. • Need for collaboration between organizations. • Need for enhanced marketing and promotion of events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of public transportation to Co-op Place and cost of public transportation. • Challenges with parking at the Esplanade. • No holiday bus service. • Accessibility issues behind Medalta, particularly in the rainy season. • Inclusivity at events (e.g., accommodating children with ADHD). • Lack of promotion of events. (Suggestions included a central place for events, event app, or comprehensive information source). • Cost of events. • Lack of volunteers. • Lack of engagement with high school students. • Lack of activities for older adults. • Being more informed. • Need a one stop shot for event information. • Require more advertising at the college for events.

Satisfaction	Activity Needs	Barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity for more art projects such as a colourful banner project at Allowance Avenue Bridge.• More classes including dance and ballroom dancing.• Opportunity to host performances at Athletic Park.• Increased funding for smaller organizations and sports groups.• Need for cemetery history tours/Ghost story walking tours.• Longer operational hours at Echo Dale Park and the art gallery.• A welcome pack for senior communities.• Outside movie nights or drive in movies.• Utilizing Echo Dale for concerts.• More events on Fridays.• Drone light show.• set location where something happens weekly.• Cultural Days and multicultural events.• Silent Discos.• Community led "makerspace" that has tools for anyone to create and learn.	

Youth Input Session

Youth input was gathered at an in-person engagement station on January 29th at the Be YOUth Centre. 8 youth provided input. The main findings are provided next.

Satisfaction	Activity Needs	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Youth are satisfied with events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More winter sport events.More concerts and musicals for youth.More sports competitions/tournaments (e.g., go-karting, E-sports).More winter activities (skating, ice hockey, tobogganing, snow shoeing).More culture events (arts, music, and food).More funding for Indigenous artists.More activities for youth at events (e.g., bouncy castles).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Not being aware of events/activities.More access to indoor facilities during events for sun and heat protection.

Seniors Input Session

Seniors input was gathered at an in-person engagement station on January 20th, 2024 at the Veiner Centre. 8 seniors provided input. The main findings are provided next.

Satisfaction	Activity Needs	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly satisfied with the signs around the city for heritage sites/houses.• Satisfied with what is currently offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More festivals in the summers (e.g., Lilac festival in Calgary).• Showcase more local talent (potters, artists, music).• Cemetery tours.• Less expensive options.• More outdoor music events (e.g., Porch Fest).• Activities such as scavenger hunts, Pancake breakfasts, etc.• Materials such as brochures to show where different points of interest are.• More activities to occur at the Heritage Pavilion and the Riverside Veterans Memorial Park.• Holiday events such as Christmas light tours.• Extend the New Years Celebration and have more free entertainment.• Need for more classical music concerts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City website can be challenging to navigate.• Long lines at Co-op Place during events.• Lack of marketing and promotions. There is a need to have all events advertised in a single location.• Need for more hard copy resources in terms of promotion.• Timing of activities (e.g., some are offered too late).• Venue challenges (e.g., music volume and dim lighting at Co-op Place).• Transportation challenges (e.g., Esplanade, Library, and Co-op Place).• Need for better signage to show where parks and venues are.• Costs (concerts can be expensive).• No venues to showcase local artists' work.

Staff Input Workshop

A staff input workshop was hosted on February 7, 2024. 19 participants attended the workshop. The following summarizes the input received.

- Need to ensure metrics are developed to evaluate the success of arts, heritage, and events.
- Enhanced collaboration between departments and external organizations.
- Opportunity for programming at park spaces.
- Ensuring community events are accessible (e.g., free or low cost).
- Addressing challenges faced by third party groups such as insurance, permits, and rental fees.
- Need for a single point of contact such as a Liaison Officer to support community groups.
- Need for a diversification of programming, especially to engage young adults and activate community spaces.
- Enhance promotions of arts, heritage, and entertainment offerings.
- Priorities include more operational support, unifying the City's staff team, and making Medicine Hat a vibrant and attractive community that attracts new residents and visitors.

Interviews

Interviews with stakeholders were conducted between January 19 and March 27, 2024. The following summarizes the input received.

- Lack of collaboration between organizations and between organizations and the City.
- Desire for more support for non-profits (e.g. funding).
- Need for engagement with younger demographics.
- Opportunity for enhanced activities and events for all age groups.
- Enhanced marketing and promotions of activities and events as well as supporting local organizations with promoting their events.
- Opportunity for more events and markets to be hosted downtown.
- More space for local artists to showcase their work and for groups to hold specialty classes such as pottery.
- Underutilization of current venues such as Town Square and the Cultural Centre.
- Opportunity to utilize existing facilities more such as the Big Marble Go Centre, Co-op Place, Exhibition and Stampede, and the Athletic Park.
- Challenge with some community groups finding the right space that is cost effective.
- Important for the City to have a shared vision about arts, heritage, and entertainment.
- Need for an Arts Council.

Draft Plan Feedback Opportunity

The draft City of Medicine Hat Arts, Heritage, and Entertainment Plan (dated September 20, 2024) was shared publicly in the Fall of 2024 and the community was asked for their feedback on it. Feedback was collected through a staffed engagement station set up in the Esplanade during the Art in Motion Event on September 28, 2024. 18 people provided feedback at the station. Written comments were also accepted. Two responses were received. The following summarizes the feedback received from both opportunities.

- Events in Medicine Hat are great, especially the Art in Motion Event. There are a lot of vendors and participants. Would like to see more events like Art in Motion.
- There are lots of arts, heritage, and entertainment activities to do in Medicine Hat. Some participants were satisfied with the number of activities available.
- Medicine Hat has more to offer its groups than many other Alberta cities of comparable size.
- The plan is very thorough and well done overall. There was appreciation for the amount of data in the report.
- Strong agreement with the outcome statements and action items identified in the plan.
- Support for the idea of the cultural forum.
- Support for the action to activate downtown Medicine Hat with cultural activity.
- Agreement that more collaboration in the AHE sector is needed to reduce duplication and competition.
- Would like to see more advertising of arts, heritage, and entertainment opportunities. Some find it challenging to find information on upcoming events.
- Opportunity to explore linking existing events more to increase attendance.
- Committees need to have actionable outcomes.
- Would like to see more events on weekends throughout the summer.
- Lack of classical music performances.
- Consider changing the cover image of the report.
- Define arts, heritage, and entertainment for those who do not know what they are.
- The report needs to be inspiring to draw people in and catch their attention. Especially, for those reading who may not be invested in arts, heritage, and entertainment.
- There is a need to promote the value of City events and ensure people recognize the role tax dollars play in keeping fees low. Perhaps there would be more involvement and participation if people knew about that.
- The City could provide more support to Community Vibrancy Grant recipients, particularly in regard to education about processes.
- Opportunity to partner more with transportation services and businesses to liven up downtown.

Appendix H – Example Performance Measures

Quantitative Measures:

- Attendance/registration figures.
- Number of programs/events offered.
- Utilization rate of facilities.
- Number of cultural assets.
- Number of local artists/performers featured.
- Number of community organizations supported by City programs and staff.
- Diversity of participants.
- Revenue/expense targets.
- Cost recovery.
- Ticket prices/costs to participate.
- Marketing metrics (e.g. impressions, conversions).
- Number and size of grants received.
- Leverage achieved on municipal funding (i.e. how much revenue from other sources were secured to augment City investments).
- Sustainability of funding sources.
- Maintenance of cultural infrastructure.
- Economic impact (e.g. cultural-related spending, jobs supported and/or created, local culture-related businesses, taxes generated, etc.).

Qualitative Measures:

- Social impact (e.g. inclusion, health and wellness, sense of belonging, community pride, community engagement, etc.).
- Levels of resident and/or participant satisfaction.
- Quality of life improvements.
- Diversity of cultural offerings.
- Knowledge of heritage.
- Heritage conserved.
- Perception of affordability.
- Perception of accessibility.
- Participation in reconciliation efforts.
- Level of collaboration.
- Satisfaction with partner relationships.
- Service delivery (i.e. was the program/event well-executed?).

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